THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE UNITED STATES

HISTORY, POLITICS, AND IDEOLOGIES

SIXTH EDITION

EDITED BY
DAVID W. LESCH
MARK L. HAAS

THE
MIDDLE EAST
AND THE
UNITED STATES

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Edited by
David W. Lesch
Trinity University
Mark L. Haas
Duquesne University

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TO OUR CHILDREN,

Katie, Abby, and Will (MLH)
and Michael (DWL).

MAY THEY KNOW A WORLD AT PEACE.

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PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

As typically occurs between editions of this volume, a lot has happened in the past several years in the Middle East—and for this edition, in the United States as well—that has significantly affected the US–Middle East dynamic and thus warrants the publication of a new edition with new and revised chapters. The last edition, the fifth, was published in 2012, but because of the events occurring in the region associated with the Arab uprisings in late 2010 and into 2011, an updated version was published in 2014. With the lead time necessary for the publication process, the contributors to the 2014 edition could only comment on and analyze events that occurred through the first months of 2013.

A slew of important events have occurred since then, such as the increasing intensity of the Syrian civil war, the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, the Iran nuclear deal, dramatic political shifts in countries such as Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, and the last years of President Barack Obama's second term in office and the first inklings of the policies of President Donald Trump, who stunningly won the 2016 US presidential election. In addition, the distance in time from the seminal events of the early 2000s, 9/11 and its aftermath (including the US-led invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003), and the initial repercussions of the Arab uprisings has afforded contributors more perspective and historical context.

We have substantially updated and revised this edition to account for more recent events and changes in perspective, including reorganizing and, in some cases, renaming the sections of the book. For the first time, we have included brief introductions to each section in order to improve the flow of the chapters and provide some thematic historical context. Unfortunately, because of constraints regarding page count and the related endeavor of making this book as affordable as possible, we were compelled to remove some excellent chapters. In particular, as we are further removed from the post–World War II superpower Cold War, and as events in US-Middle East history have accumulated in its aftermath, we decided to pare down the number of chapters focusing on the Cold War from what appeared in previous editions; however, we strongly encourage those who are interested in this and other subjects to read the relevant chapters in previous editions.

A couple of changes worth mentioning in particular: (1) William Quandt, who authored and updated the final chapter in each of the five previous editions, has replaced that chapter with a new essay for this volume, one that has been reworked from a section of his book *Peace Process*. It explores how US foreign policy is made and the constraints, pressures, and challenges that US administrations typically encounter in the making of this policy. We decided to place this chapter at the beginning of book, prior to Part I in order to provide a better understanding of what follows in terms of US foreign policy making. (2) The chapter on the Mussadiq crisis in Iran (1951–1953) authored by former (and legendary) British diplomat Sir Sam Falle, who sadly passed at the age of ninety-five after the publication of the previous edition, has been reworked by the editors and added as an insert at the end of Mark Gasiorowski's chapter on the same subject. Although, as mentioned earlier, we have reduced the number of Cold War contributions overall, we did not want to lose Sir Sam's unique participant-observer analysis. So although we edited down his essay, the essence of his illuminating chapter, which has been a part of this series since the beginning, continues on.

As always, because of the gap in time before publication, the authors writing on current events could only comment on matters into the early months of 2017. So with a 2018 publication date, there will no doubt be some events that fall through the cracks; for instance, the Islamic State, which as of this writing seems to be on its last legs in Iraq and Syria, may no longer exist as a territorial entity by the time the book comes out. In addition, the Trump administration's foreign policy toward the Middle East may (or may not) be more fully formed by the time of publication, yet contributors could only comment on, at best, the first months of Trump's time in office.

We want to thank Ada Fung, senior acquisitions editor at Westview Press, who has been magnificently capable and great to work with, and indeed the entire Westview Press team, for helping us through this laborious process and putting out a volume that we hope exceeds even the quality of previous editions. We also want to thank the contributors, whose commitment to quality and the timely submission of their chapters has made our lives that much easier. Finally, Mark thanks his wife, Margaret, and his three children, Katie, Abby, and Will, and David thanks his wife, Judy, and his son, Michael, for all their love and support. Their presence is a constant reminder of what is most important, and for that we are eternally grateful.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

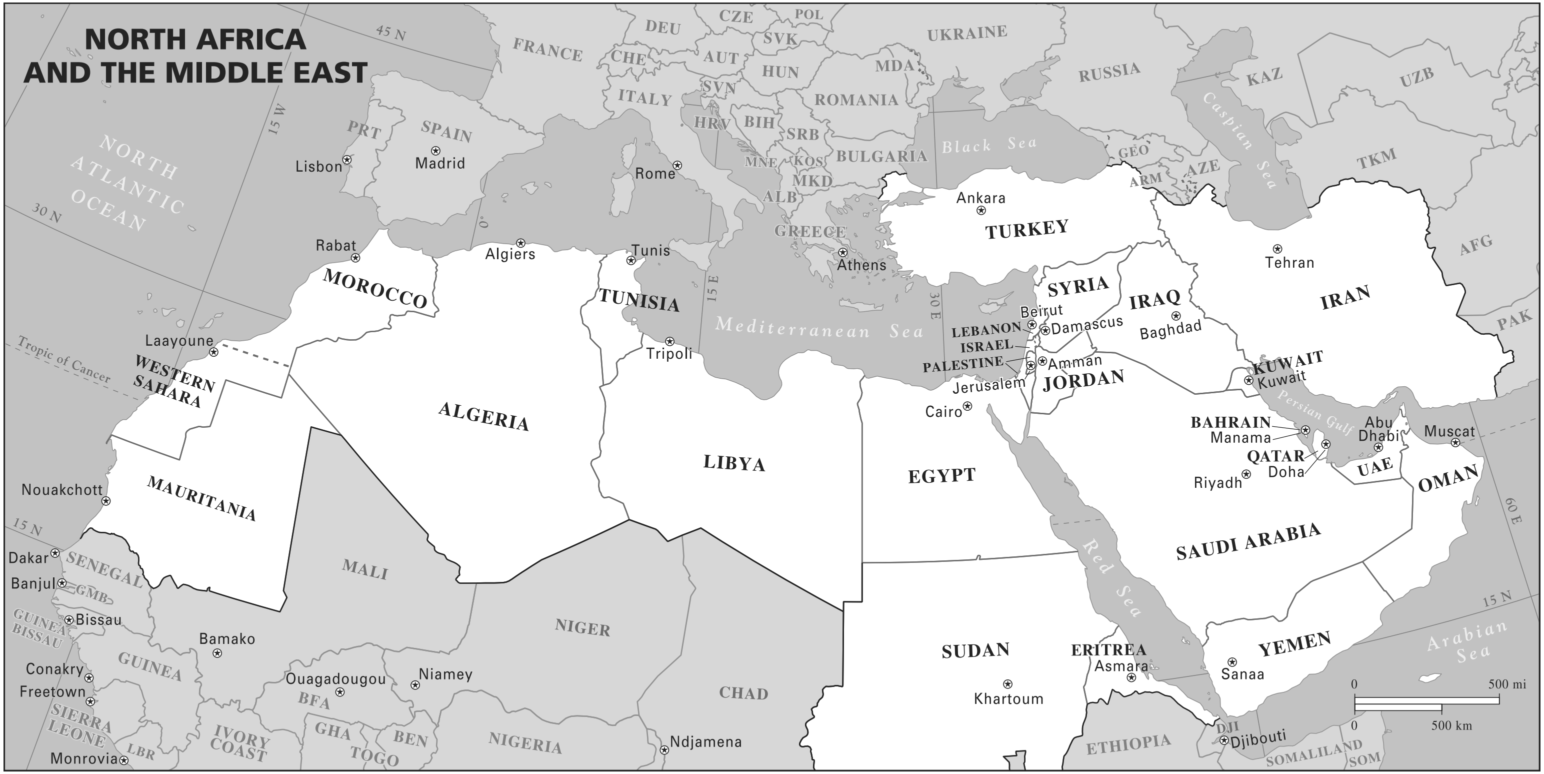
One of the challenges of compiling an edited volume of works written by different individuals is ensuring stylistic consistency among chapters. In particular, many authors have used their own system of transliteration. We generally retained each author's style except for names and terms that appear throughout the text. In these cases, we selected one variation of spelling, which is often the more recognizable version rather than a strict transliteration: for example, "Hussein" rather than "Husayn" or "Hussain"; "Faisal" rather than "Faysal" or "Feisal"; "Nasser" rather than "Nasir"; and "Mussadiq" rather than "Mossadeq," "Mossadegh," or "Musaddiq." Many of the chapters include a diacritic mark (‘) for the important Arabic consonant *‘ayn;* however, we have eliminated the diacritic mark for the Arabic *hamza* (ء). One hopes few exceptions have slipped through.

Wars are often referred to by different names depending upon which country or group is doing the referencing. We have generally allowed the authors some leeway in terms of determining the way in which an event is referenced—attempting to come up with standardized versions often does more to complicate matters than simplify them. For instance, two major conflicts involving Israel are generally referred to as the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the 1973 Arab-Israeli war; however, the first is also known as the June War or Six-Day War, the second as the October War, the Yom Kippur War, or the Ramadan War. In certain instances, individual contributors employ these terms.

Since the international community, including the United States, still recognizes Tel Aviv as the official capital of Israel, some of the contributors use "Tel Aviv" rather than "Jerusalem" in some references to Israeli policy, even though the seat of government in Israel is clearly located in Jerusalem. Generally, we let the authors decide.

D. W. L. and M. L. H.

NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST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INTRODUCTION

How American Middle East Policy Is Made

William B. Quandt

More than almost any other region of the world, the Middle East has consistently competed for top priority on the American foreign policy agenda. This chapter tries to account for the prominence of Middle East issues in American policy circles in recent decades. It seeks to analyze the ways in which perceived national interests have interacted with domestic political considerations to ensure that Arab-Israeli peacemaking, along with recent crises in Iran, Iraq, and Syria, have become the province of the US president and his closest advisers.

MODELS OF POLICYMAKING

Because presidents and secretaries of state—not faceless bureaucrats—usually set the guidelines for policy on the Middle East, it is important to try to understand how they come to adopt the views that guide them through the labyrinthine complexities of the region's diplomatic and strategic challenges. Here several models compete for attention.

One model would have us believe that policies flow from a cool deliberation of national interest. This *strategic* model assumes that decisions are made by rational decision makers. Such a perspective implies that it does not much matter who occupies the Oval Office. The high degree of continuity in several aspects of the American stance toward the region, like support for Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel, regardless of the administration or party occupying the White House, would serve as evidence that broad interests and rational policy processes provide the best explanation for how policy is made.

But anyone who has spent time in government will testify that policymaking is anything but orderly and rational. As described by the *bureaucratic politics* model, different agencies compete with one another, fixed organizational procedures are hard to change, and reliable information is difficult to come by. This perspective places a premium on bureaucratic rivalries and the "game" of policymaking. Policy outcomes are much less predictable from this perspective. Instead, one needs to look at who is influencing whom. Microlevel analysis is needed, in contrast to the broad systemic approach favored by the strategic model. Much of the gossip of Washington is based on the premise that the insiders' political game is what counts in setting policy. Foreign embassies try desperately to convince their governments back home that seemingly sinister policy outcomes are often simply the result of the normal give-and-take of everyday bureaucratic struggles—the compromises, the foul-ups, and the trading of favors that are part of the Washington scene. If conspiracy theorists thrive on the strategic model—that there must be a logical explanation for each action taken by the government—political cynics and comics have a field day with the bureaucratic politics model.[1]

A third model, one emphasizing the importance of *domestic politics*, is also injected into the study of American policy in the Middle East, especially toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. Without a doubt, Arab-Israeli policymaking in Washington does get tangled up in internal politics. Congress, whose support for Israel is usually high and on whom pro-Israeli lobbies tend to concentrate their efforts, can frequently exert influence over foreign policy, largely through its control over the budget.[2] While some senators and representatives no doubt do consider the national interest, for many others positions taken on the Arab-Israeli conflict are little more than part of their domestic reelection strategy. Some analysts have maintained that American Middle East policy is primarily an expression of either the pro-Israeli lobby or the oil lobby.[3] Little evidence will be found here for such a one-dimensional view, even though in some circumstances the pro-Israel lobby has been very influential, especially since the 1990s.

Besides considering the role of Congress, one must also take into account the effect of the workings of the American political system, especially the four-year cycle of presidential elections. This cycle imposes some regular patterns on the policymaking process that have little to do with the world outside but a great deal to do with the way power is pursued and won through elections.[4] One should hardly be surprised to find that every four years the issue of moving the American embassy to Jerusalem reemerges, arms sales to Arab countries are deferred, and presidential contenders emphasize those parts of their program that are most congenial to the supporters of Israel. Nor should one be surprised to find that once the election is over, policy usually returns to a more evenhanded course.

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICYMAKING

Each of these models—strategic, bureaucratic politics, and domestic politics—can illuminate aspects of how the United States has engaged with the Arab-Israeli peace process and other dimensions of Middle East policy.[5] However, the overriding factor, in my opinion, is the view of the conflict—the definition of the situation—held by the president and his closest advisers, usually including the secretary of state. The president is more than just the first among equals in a bureaucratic struggle or in domestic political debates. And the president is certainly not a purely rational, strategic thinker.

In American politics, there is a strong presumption that who is president matters. Huge sums are spent on electoral campaigns to select the president. The office receives immense respect and deference, and most writers of American political history assume that the man or woman occupying the White House can shape events. Does this perspective merely reflect an individualism rooted in American culture, or does it contain a profound truth?

One can easily imagine situations in which it would be meaningless to explain a policy by looking at the individuals responsible for making the decisions. If no real margin for choice exists, individuals do not count for much. Other factors take precedence. For example, to predict the voting behavior of senators from New York on aid to Israel, one normally need not consider their identity. It is enough to know something about the constituency, the overwhelming support for Israel among New Yorkers, and the absence of countervailing pressures to be virtually certain about the policy choice of an individual senator.

If context can account for behavior, so can the nature of perceived interests or objectives. If we were studying Japan's policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, we would not be especially concerned with who was prime minister at any given moment. It would make more sense to look at the dependence of Japan on Arab oil and the lack of any significant cultural or economic ties to Israel and predict that Japan would adopt a generally pro-Arab policy. When interests easily converge on a single policy, individual choice can be relegated to the background.

Finally, if a nation has no capability to act in foreign policy, we will not be particularly interested in the views of its leaders. To ask why a small European country does not assume a more active role in promoting an Arab-Israeli settlement does not require us to examine who is in charge of policy. Instead, the country's inability to significantly affect the behavior of Arabs and Israelis is about all we need to know. A country without important economic, military, or diplomatic assets has virtually no choices to make in foreign policy.

Obviously none of these conditions holds for the United States in its approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as other Middle East issues. Capabilities for action do exist. The nature of American interests, as generally understood by policymakers, does not predetermine a single course of action. And, despite the obvious constraints imposed by the structure of the international system and domestic politics, choices do exist on most issues, even though at times the margin of choice may be narrow.

More than anything else, an analyst studying American Middle East policy should want to know how the president—and the few key individuals to whom he listens—makes sense of the many arguments, the mountain of facts, and the competing claims he hears whenever attention turns to issues in the Middle East. To a large degree the president must impose order where none seems to exist; he must make sense out of something he may hardly understand; he must simplify when complexity becomes overwhelming; and he must decide to authorize others to act in his name if he is not interested enough, or competent enough, to formulate the main lines of policy.

What, then, do the president and his top advisers rely on if not generalized views that they bring with them into office? No senior policymaker in American history has ever come to power with a well-developed understanding of the nuances of the Arab-Israeli dispute, the intricacies of its history, or even much knowledge of the protagonists. The same is true, and often even more pronounced, when other regional issues come to the fore. At best policymakers have general ideas, notions, inclinations, biases, predispositions, fragments of knowledge. To some extent ideology plays a part, although there has never really been a neat liberal-versus-conservative, Democrat-versus-Republican divide over Middle East issues.

Any account of policymaking would, however, be incomplete if it did nothing more than map the initial predispositions of key decision makers. As important as these are in setting the broad policy guidelines for an administration, they are not enough. Policy is not static, set once and forever after unchanged. Nor is policy reassessed every day. But over time views do change, learning takes place, and policies are adjusted. As a result, a process of convergence seems to take place, whereby the views of senior policymakers toward Middle East issues differ most from those of their predecessors when they first take office and tend to resemble them by the end of their terms. Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter disagreed on Middle East policy in 1976–1977 but later coauthored articles on what should be done to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Even Ronald Reagan in his later years seemed closer to his predecessor's outlook than to his own initial approach to Arab-Israeli diplomacy. It is this process of adjustment, modification, and adaptation to the realities of the Middle East and to the realities of Washington that allows each administration to deal with uncertainty and change. Without this on-the-job learning, American foreign policy would be at best a rigid, brittle affair.

What triggers a change in attitudes? Is the process of learning incremental, or do changes occur suddenly because of crises or the failure of previous policies? When change takes place, are core values called into account, or are tactics merely revised? Recent history suggests that change rarely affects deeply held views. Presidents and their advisers seem reluctant to abandon central beliefs. Basic positions are adhered to with remarkable tenacity, accounting for the stability in the stated positions of the United States on the major issues at stake in the Middle East. They represent a deep consensus. But politicians and diplomats have no trouble making adjustments in their understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict, or of the crisis in Iraq, or the importance of negotiating with Iran over its nuclear program, and that is often enough to produce a substantial change in policy, if not in basic positions or in overall strategy. One simple change in judgment—that Egyptian president Anwar Sadat should be taken seriously—was enough to lead to a major reassessment of American policy in the midst of the October 1973 war.

Since much of the American-led Arab-Israeli peace process has been geared toward procedures, not substance, the ability of top decision makers to experiment with various approaches as they learn more about the conflict has imparted an almost experimental quality to policymaking. Almost every conceivable tactic is eventually considered, some are tried, and some even work. And if one administration does not get it right, within a matter of years another team will be in place, willing to try other approaches. Although American foreign policy is sometimes maddening in its lack of consistency and short attention span, this ability to abandon failed approaches and move on has often been the hallmark of eventual success.

The making of foreign policy seems to involve an interplay among the initial predispositions of top policymakers, information about the specific issues being considered, the pull of bureaucratic groupings, the weight of domestic political considerations, the management of transitions from one presidency to the next, and the impact of events in the region of concern. It is often in the midst of crises that new policies are devised, that the shortcomings of one approach are clearly seen, and that a new definition of the situation is imposed. And it is in the midst of crises that presidential powers are at their greatest. This was certainly the case in the midst of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the intervention in Iraq from 2003 onward.

Only rarely are crises anticipated and new policies adopted to ward them off. As a result, American policy often seems to run on automatic pilot until jolted out of its inertial course by an event beyond its control, such as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Critics who find this pattern alarming need to appreciate how complex it is to balance the competing perspectives that vie for support in the Oval Office and how difficult it is to set a course that seems well designed to protect the multiple interests of a global power like the United States—and to do all this without risking one's political life.

NATIONAL INTERESTS

To get a sense of the difficulty, consider the nature of American interests in the Middle East, as seen from the perspective of the White House. An assessment of these interests almost always takes place at the outset of a new administration or just after a crisis, in the belief, usually unjustified, that light will be shed on what should be done to advance the prospects of Arab-Israeli peace or regional stability at the least risk to American interests.

Politicians and some analysts like to invoke the national interest because it seems to encompass tangible, hardheaded concerns as opposed to sentimental, emotional considerations. There is something imposing about cloaking a decision in the garb of national security interests, as if no further debate were needed.

In the real world of policymaking, interests are indeed discussed, but most officials understand that any definition of a national interest contains a strong subjective element. Except for limited areas of foreign affairs, such as trade policy, objective yardsticks do not exist to determine the national interest.

Containment of Soviet Influence

In discussions of the Arab-Israeli conflict, several distinct national interests often compete, confounding the problems of policymaking. For example, until about 1990 most analysts would have said that a major American interest in the Middle East, which was therefore related to the handling of Arab-Israeli diplomacy, was the *containment of Soviet influence* in the region. This interest derived from a broader strategy of containment that had been developed initially for Europe but was gradually universalized during the Cold War.

In Europe the strategy of containment led to creation of the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But the attempt to replicate these mechanisms of containment in the Middle East failed, in part because of the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict. So, however much American policymakers might worry about the growth of Soviet influence in the region, they rarely knew what should be done about it. In the brief period of a few months in 1956–1957, the United States opposed the Israeli-French-British attack on Egypt (the Suez war), announced the Eisenhower Doctrine of support to anti-Communist regimes in the area, forced the Israelis to withdraw from Sinai, and criticized Nasser's Egypt for its intervention in the affairs of other Arab countries. How all that contributed coherently to the agreed-on goal of limiting Soviet influence was never quite clear.

Over the years many policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict were justified, at least in part, by this concern about the Soviet Union. Arms sales were made and denied in pursuit of this interest, and the Soviets were excluded from or included in discussions on the region as part of the goal of trying to manage Soviet influence in the region.

One might think that a strategy of challenging the Soviets in the region would have led the United States to adopt belligerent, interventionist policies, as it did in Southeast Asia. But in the Middle East the concern about overt Soviet military intervention was high, especially from the mid-1960s on, and therefore any American intervention, it was felt, might face a comparable move by the Soviets. Indeed, on several occasions—in the June 1967 war, in 1970 in Jordan, during the October 1973 war, and to a lesser degree in 1982 in Lebanon—the United States feared a possible military confrontation with the Soviet Union. However ardently American officials might have wanted to check Soviet advances, they wanted to do so without much risk of direct military confrontation with Moscow. In brief, the Soviet angle was never far from the minds of policymakers, but it did little to help clarify choices. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990–1991, this interest suddenly disappeared, leaving oil and Israel as the two main American concerns in the Middle East.[6]

Oil

Oil has always been a major reason for the United States to pay special attention to the Middle East, but its connection to the Arab-Israeli conflict has not always been apparent. American companies were active in developing the oil resources of the area, especially in Saudi Arabia; the industrialized West was heavily dependent on Middle East oil; and American import needs began to grow from the early 1970s on.[7]

The basic facts about oil in the region are easy to understand. Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran, along with the small states of the Persian Gulf littoral, sit atop about two-thirds of the known reserves of oil in the world—reserves with remarkably low production costs. Thus Middle East stability seems to go hand in hand with access to relatively inexpensive supplies of oil.

Throughout most of the 1950s and 1960s Middle East oil was readily available for the reconstruction of Europe and Japan. American companies made good profits, and threatened disruptions of supply had little effect. A conscious effort to keep Persian Gulf affairs separate from the Arab-Israeli conflict seemed to work quite well.

But by the late 1960s the British had decided to withdraw their military presence from east of Suez. How, if at all, would that affect the security of Gulf oil supplies? Should the United States try to fill the vacuum with forces of its own, or should it try to build up regional powers, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia? If arms were sold to Saudi Arabia to help ensure access to oil supplies, how would the Israelis and the other Arab countries react? What would the Soviets do? In short, how could an interest that everyone agreed was important be translated into concrete policies?

American calculations about oil are further complicated by the fact that the United States is both a large producer and a large importer of oil. For those concerned about enhancing domestic supplies, the low production costs of Middle East oil are always a potential threat. Texas oil producers argue for quotas to protect them from cheap foreign oil. But consumers want inexpensive oil and therefore resist gasoline taxes, tariffs, and quotas designed to prop up the domestic oil industry. No American president would know how to answer the question of the proper price of Middle East oil. If forced to give an answer, he would have to mumble something like, "Not too high and not too low." In practice, the stability and predictability of oil supplies have been seen as more important than a specific price. This perception has reinforced the view that the main American interest is in reliable access to Middle East oil, and therefore in regional stability. Still, price cannot be ignored. In the early 1990s the annual import bill for oil from the Middle East exceeded $10 billion, out of a total oil import bill of $35 billion. Each one-dollar increase in the price of oil added more than $1 billion to the oil import bill. In the aftermath of the US intervention in Iraq in 2003, the price of oil soared from around twenty-five dollars per barrel to more than one hundred dollars. Certainly American presidents since 1990 would have been much less preoccupied with Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia if oil played a smaller role in the world economy.

America's Special Commitment to Israel

The other main interest that has dominated American discussions of the Middle East is its special commitment to Israel. The United States was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the idea of a Jewish state in part of Palestine. That support was clearly rooted in a sense of moral commitment to the survivors of the Holocaust, as well as in the intense attachment of American Jews to Israel. During the 1980s, as an ally in the Cold War, a strategic rationale was added to the traditional list of reasons for supporting Israel, although this view was never universally accepted.

Support for Israel was always tempered by a desire to maintain some interests in surrounding Arab countries, whether because of oil, or competition with the Soviet Union, or other geostrategic concerns. As a result, in most of the years from 1949 until the mid-1960s, the United States provided few arms and only modest amounts of aid to Israel. As Eisenhower demonstrated in 1956, support for Israel did not mean offering a blank check.

Managing the relationship with the Soviet Union in the Middle East, having access to inexpensive oil, and supporting Israel were American interests readily accepted by successive administrations. Yet what the implications for policy were of any one, to say nothing of all three, of these interests was not clear. To take the most difficult case, what should be done when one set of interests seemed to be at variance with another? Which should get more weight: the economic interest of oil, the strategic interest of checking Soviet advances, or the moral interest of supporting Israel?

Without a common yardstick, the interests were literally incommensurable. How could arms for the Saudis or Jordanians be squared with support for Israel? How could Soviet inroads in a country like Egypt be checked? Was it better to oppose Nasser to teach him a lesson about the costs of relying on the Soviets, or should an effort be made to win him away from dependence on Moscow? And what would either of these approaches mean for relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia? More recently, the Obama administration had to take into consideration Iran's anti-Israeli stance as it attempted to restrain Iran's nuclear ambitions.

In brief, after World War II, US national interests were clearly involved in the Middle East and would be affected by every major policy choice. But there was almost no agreement on what these interests meant in terms of concrete policies. Advocates of different perspectives, as will be seen, were equally adept at invoking national interests to support their preferred courses of action. Often policy preferences seemed to come first, and then the interests were found to justify the policy. Precisely because of these dilemmas, policymaking could not be left to bureaucrats. The stakes were too high, the judgments too political. Thus Middle East policy, with remarkable frequency, landed in the lap of the president or his secretary of state. More than for most issues of foreign policy, presidential leadership became crucial to the Arab-Israeli peace process and broader Middle East policy as well.

Insofar as presidents and their advisers saw a way to resolve the potential conflict among American interests in the Middle East, it was by promoting the Arab-Israeli peace process (at least in the period before the terror attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, after which the "war on terror" took center stage). This policy has been the closest equivalent to that of containment toward the Soviet Union—a policy with broad bipartisan support that promised to protect a range of important American interests. If Arab-Israeli peace could be achieved, it was thought, Soviet influence in the region would decline, Israeli security would be enhanced, and American relations with key Arab countries would improve. Regional stability would therefore be more easily achieved, and oil supplies would be less threatened. Obviously, other sources of trouble would still exist in the region, but few disagreed on the desirability of Arab-Israeli peace or the need for American leadership to achieve it. The differences, and they were many, came over the feasibility of a peace settlement and appropriate tactics. In making these judgments, presidents made their most important contributions to the formulation of policy.

CONFRONTING COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY

Most political leaders, with no noteworthy alteration in personality or psychodynamics, are likely at some point to change positions on policy issues. Often such changes will be portrayed as opportunism or waffling. But they could instead be a reaction to a complicated situation, suggesting that people can learn as new information is acquired. Particularly when dealing with complex events and ambiguous choices, people may shift their positions quite suddenly, without altering the fundamental aspects of their approaches to policy. As Raymond Bauer said, "Policy problems are sufficiently complex that for the vast majority of individuals or organizations it is conceivable—given the objective features of the situation—to imagine them ending up on any side of the issue."[8]

Policymakers often find it difficult to recognize the difference between a good proposal and a bad proposal. In normal circumstances, bargaining and compromising may be rational courses of action for a politician to follow, but adopting either of these assumes that issues have been defined according to some understood criteria. When such criteria are not obvious, what should one do?

On most issues of importance, policymakers operate in an environment in which uncertainty and complexity are dominant. Addressing an unknowable future with imperfect information about the past and present, policymakers must use guidelines and simplifications drawn from their own experience, the "lessons of history," or the consensus of their colleagues. The result is often a cautious style of decision making that strives merely to make incremental changes in existing policies.[9] At times, however, very sudden shifts in policy may also take place. How can one account for both these outcomes?

Leadership is only rarely the task of selecting between good and bad policies. Instead, the anguish and challenge of leadership is to choose between equally plausible arguments about how best to achieve one's goals. For example, most presidents and their advisers have placed a very high value on achieving Arab-Israeli peace. But values do not easily translate into policy. Instead, several reasonable alternatives, such as the following, are likely to compete for presidential attention:

- If Israel is to feel secure enough to make the territorial concessions necessary to gain Arab acceptance of the terms of a peace agreement, it must continue to receive large quantities of American military and economic aid.
- If Israel feels too strong and self-confident, it will not see the need for any change in the status quo. US aid must therefore be used as a form of pressure.

Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, and George H. W. Bush all subscribed to both the foregoing views at different times.

Similarly, consider the following propositions, which were widely entertained by US presidents until the breakup of the USSR:

- The Soviet Union has no interest in peace in the Middle East, because it would lose influence if it could not exploit tensions in the area. Hence, the United States cannot expect cooperation from the Soviet Union in the search for a settlement.
- The Soviets, like ourselves, have mixed interests in the Middle East. They fear a confrontation with the United States and are therefore prepared to support an Arab-Israeli settlement, provided they are allowed to participate in the diplomatic process. By leaving the Soviet Union out, the United States provides it with an incentive to sabotage the peacemaking effort. Therefore, US-Soviet agreement will be essential to reaching peace in the Middle East.

Concerning the Arabs, one may also hear diverse opinions:

- Only when the Arabs have regained their self-respect and feel strong will they be prepared to make peace with Israel.
- When the Arabs feel that time is on their side, they increase their demands and become more extreme. Only a decisive military defeat will convince them that Israel is here to stay and that they must use political means to regain their territory.

Each of these propositions has been seriously entertained by recent American presidents and secretaries of state. One could almost say that all of them have been believed at various times by some individuals. The key element in selecting among these plausible interpretations of reality is not merely whether one is pro-Israeli or pro-Arab, or hard-line or not so hard-line on relations with Moscow. A more complex process is at work.

LESSONS OF HISTORY

In choosing among plausible but imperfectly understood courses of action, policymakers inevitably resort to simplifications.[10] Categorical inferences are thus made; confusing events are placed in comprehensible structures; reality is given a definition that allows purposive action to take place. Recent experience is a particularly potent source of guidance for the future. If a policy has worked in one setting, policymakers will want to try it in another context as well. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, for example, apparently relied on his experiences in negotiating with the Chinese, Russians, and Vietnamese when he approached negotiations with the Arabs and Israelis in 1974–1975. Step-by-step diplomacy was the result.

More general historical “lessons” may loom large in the thinking of policymakers as they confront new problems.[11] President Harry Truman was especially inclined to invoke historical analogies. He well understood that the essence of presidential leadership is the ability to make decisions in the face of uncertainty and to live with their consequences. By relying on history, he was able to reassure himself that his decisions were well founded.[12]

Several historical analogies have been notably effective in structuring American views of reality. The lessons of Munich, for example, have been pointed to repeatedly over the years, principally that the appeasement of dictators serves only to whet their appetite for further conquest. Hence, a firm, resolute opposition to aggression is required. The "domino theory" is a direct descendant of this perspective, as was the policy of containment.

A second set of guidelines for policy stems from President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points after World War I, especially the emphasis on self-determination and opposition to spheres of influence. As embodied in the Atlantic Charter in 1941, these principles strongly influenced American policy during the Second World War.[13] Since the failure of US policy in Southeast Asia, new "lessons" have been drawn that warn against overinvolvement, commitments in marginal areas, excessive reliance on force, and playing the role of world policeman. Whether these will prove as durable as the examples of Munich and Wilsonian idealism remains to be seen, but American policy continues to be discussed in terms of these historical analyses.

During the presidential election campaign of 2016, another lesson from recent history was on display. Virtually every candidate in the two major parties—a total of more than eighteen politicians—went on record as saying that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 had been a mistake, even though a number of the candidates had supported it at the time. Even those who were hawkish on Syria were careful to say that they did not support committing significant numbers of ground troops, nor did they call for an ambitious program of "nation building." These lessons of Iraq are likely to color American policy in the Middle East for many years.

When recent experience and historical analogies fail to resolve dilemmas of choice, certain psychological mechanisms may come to the rescue. Wishful thinking is a particularly potent way to resolve uncertainty. When in doubt, choose the course that seems least painful, that fits best with one's hopes and expectations; perhaps it will turn out all right after all. In any event, one can almost always rationalize a choice after making it. Good reasons can be found even for bad policies, and often the ability to come up with a convincing rationale will help to overcome uncertainties.

Apart from such well-known but poorly understood aspects of individual psychology, the social dynamics of a situation often help to resolve uncertainty. If, through discussion, a group can reach consensus on the proper course of action, individuals are likely to suppress their private doubts. Above all, when a president participates in a group decision, a strong tendency toward consensus is likely. As some scholars have emphasized, presidents must go to considerable lengths to protect themselves from the stultifying effects of group conformity in their presence and the tendency to suppress divergent views.[14] Neither President Johnson's practice of inviting a large number of advisers to consult with him nor President Nixon's effort to use the National Security Council to channel alternatives to him are guarantees against the distortions of group consensus, in part because presidents value consensus as a way to resolve doubts.

At any given moment presidents and their key advisers tend to share fairly similar and stable definitions of reality. However such definitions emerge, whether through reference to experience or to history, through wishful thinking and rationalization, or through group consensus, they provide guidelines for action in the face of uncertainty. Complexity is simplified by reference to a few key criteria. In the Middle East setting, these usually have to do with the saliency of issues, their amenability to solution, the regional balance of power, the human and economic costs of a policy, and the cost of economic and military assistance to various parties.

CRISES AND THE REDEFINING OF ISSUES

Crises play an extremely important role in the development of these guidelines. By definition, crises involve surprise, threat, and increased uncertainty. Previous policies may well be exposed as flawed or bankrupt. Reality no longer accords with previous expectations. In such a situation a new structure of perceptions is likely to emerge, one that reflects presidential perspectives to the degree that the president becomes involved in handling the crisis. If the crisis is satisfactorily resolved, a new and often quite durable set of assumptions will guide policy for some time.

Often crises can produce significant policy changes without causing a sweeping reassessment of a decision maker's views. It may be only a greater sense of urgency that brings into play a new policy. Or it may be a slight shift in assumptions about the Soviet role, for example, or the advantages of pursuing a more conciliatory policy toward Egypt. Small adjustments in a person's perceptions, in the weight accorded to one issue as opposed to another, can lead to substantial shifts of emphasis, of nuance, and therefore of action. Again, policymakers do not change from being pro-Israeli to being pro-Arab overnight, nor do they go from being isolationist to interventionist in a blink of an eye, but crises may bring into focus new relationships among issues or raise the importance of one interest, thus leading to changes in policy. Basic values remain intact, but perceptions and understanding of relationships may quickly change. George W. Bush had promised to pursue a modest foreign policy, but 9/11 changed his worldview.

TRUMP AND THE FUTURE

Donald Trump's arrival in the White House in January 2017 will provide a test of many of the propositions put forward in this chapter about how foreign policy toward the Middle East is made in Washington. First, there is the assumption that who the president is matters. If policies that have been in place for many years begin to change, then we can attribute that, at least in part, to the new president. By contrast, continuity in policy would suggest that other factors, such as bureaucratic inertia, organizational interests, stubborn national interests, and the strength of lobbying groups, are able to prevent sharp changes.

President Trump will provide an interesting test case in foreign policy leadership because he comes to office with no prior experience in government and minimal qualification in foreign affairs. His early choices for national security team show a distinct preference for military men and business executives, and little room for traditional diplomats. We can look at the many statements about the Middle East that he made during his presidential campaign for hints of what policy preferences may be. While there were some inconsistencies, the broad themes that he outlined were the following:

- The United States should be wary of military overinvolvement in the conflicts of the Middle East and should resist getting dragged into projects of democracy promotion and nation building in the region. (In short, he was standing in opposition to much of what the George W. Bush administration tried to do in the region, and to a lesser extent he was distancing himself from Obama as well.)
- Stability in the region may require cooperation with authoritarian governments such as Russia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Even dictators such as Bashar al-Asad may have to be tolerated if they are willing to stand against the more dangerous threat from the Islamic State.
- The nuclear deal with Iran should be fundamentally renegotiated or even discarded and Iran's regional ambitions should be checked.
- The United States should give Israel considerable leeway in deciding how to pursue its complicated relationship with the Palestinians. His advisers downplayed the importance of trying to promote negotiations and restrain settlement activity, although on occasion Trump himself has spoken of the importance of being seen as evenhanded in order to be a credible mediator.

While some of these positions may point to initial moves by the Trump administration, there will inevitably be adjustments along the way as predispositions encounter stubborn realities and as competing interests require subjective judgments that the president will have to consider carefully. Almost certainly, over his first several years, he will also confront unforeseen threats and perhaps some opportunities, and how those are met will tell us much about his capacity for leadership in the face of uncertainty.

Early indications concerning Trump's Middle East policy suggest a continuation and intensification of the military fight against the Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria; a warm embrace of Israel, combined with some cautionary notes about the need for restraint and the importance of negotiations; and a desire to strengthen relations with both Saudi Arabia and Egypt, justified in part as a way of containing Iran's influence in the region. Where Turkey, Russia, the Europeans, and the United Nations might fit into the design of a new approach to the Middle East is unknown, but the early signs are that the Trump administration is moving cautiously, adhering to much of the substance of Obama's policies, if not their tone, and preparing for a more hostile relationship with Iran than has been seen in many years. Indeed, it may be a crisis with Iran that forces the Trump foreign policy and national security teams to begin a serious reconsideration of some of their initial assumptions about the region.

Notes

This chapter is derived from the introduction to my book *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2005), 7–20. I have tried to expand its focus to include policy in other domains than the Arab-Israeli conflict and to update the chapter with recent examples. But the core argument is essentially that made in *Peace Process*.

1. The formative works on bureaucratic politics are Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971) and its second edition with Philip Zelikow as coauthor (New York: Pearson, 1999); and Morton Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1974). For an excellent critique, see Robert Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 4 (Dec. 1973): 467–490.

2. See Mitchell Geoffrey Bard, *The Water's Edge and Beyond: Defining the Limits to Domestic Influence on United States Middle East Policy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991).

3. Most notably, John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007).

4. See William B. Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1986 and 2016), 6–29.

5. For a more detailed discussion of these three approaches, see William B. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967–1976* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 3–28.

6. An echo of the old Cold War concern can be seen in US policy toward the Syrian crisis in 2016. On the one hand, the United States tried to work with Russia to contain the conflict. But as Russian military intervention on behalf of the Asad regime grew, so too did the anxiety about how to check Russian influence in the region.

7. See Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

8. Raymond Bauer, "The Study of Policy Formation: An Introduction," in Raymond A. Bauer and Kenneth J. Gergen, eds., *The Study of Policy Formation* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 15.

9. Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" *Public Administration Review* 19, no. 2 (Spring 1959): 79–88.

10. John D. Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 109–124.

11. Ernest May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

12. Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Berkley Publishing, 1973).

13. Lynn E. Davis, *The Cold War Begins: Soviet-American Conflict over East Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

14. Alexander L. George, "The Case for Multiple Advocacy in Making Foreign Policy," *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 3 (September 1972): 751–785; and Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

PART I

The US Enters the Middle East

US involvement in the Middle East has spanned the breadth of this country's existence, beginning most dramatically with President Thomas Jefferson's administration, which tried to stop pirating by the North African (or Barbary) provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1800s. This was a war to ensure freedom of navigation on the high seas, which was essential for US trade, as the new republic no longer enjoyed British naval protection. Aside from this early encounter, US interaction with and interest in the Middle East during the nineteenth century was limited to the private activities of missionaries and merchants. In the twentieth century, however, World War I propelled the United States onto the world stage—and into European politics—in a role it had neither sought nor experienced before. As the war was winding down, the United States quickly developed an interest in the disposition of the Middle East provinces of the defeated Ottoman Empire. The result was Washington's first significant official foray into the region: the King-Crane Commission was sent to Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, and Anatolia to inform American policy on the future of the region. Nonetheless, no US administration gave the region a high priority during the interwar years (1918–1939), although there was some interest in the growing involvement of multinational oil companies in the Middle East.

The strategic value of the region became clear in World War II, when, in 1942 and 1943, Anglo-American forces attacked and defeated German-Italian forces in the North African campaign. Soon the realization that the reconstruction of Europe and Japan—as well as the postwar economic boom in the United States—would become more and more dependent on Middle East oil (more than two-thirds of the world's known reserves) boosted the policy significance of the region in the eyes of Washington's policymakers. Moreover, the strategic value of the Middle East became linked to the emerging Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States came to believe that it was the only nation that could successfully prevent Moscow from extending its influence in the region in the wake of the weakened

British and French imperial positions. As a result, the Middle East became a policy priority for post–World War II administrations. The emergence of the state of Israel in 1948 reinforced US interest in the Middle East, but this event also complicated Washington's relations with, and objectives toward, the Arab world, as Arabs increasingly perceived US and Israeli interests as being one and the same. Complication and complexity came to define the US–Middle East relationship in the aftermath of World War II and the initial stages of the Cold War, especially as it became intertwined with the decolonization process, Arab nationalism and state building, and the emerging Arab-Israeli conflict.

Part I of this book, "The US Enters the Middle East," examines some entry points into the region since the beginning of the republic. In Chapter 1, Robert Allison looks back at America's views and interactions with the Middle East during the earliest years of the republic, showing how many Americans held a distorted image of the region and Islam and how these misperceptions contributed to the Tripolitan War. In the post–9/11 world in which we live, it seems, as Allison poignantly observes, that some perceptions have not changed all that much.

Next, James Gelvin examines the King-Crane Commission, which emanated from the idealistic intentions of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, enunciated near the end of World War I—particularly that of self-determination for subject peoples—and was ostensibly created to assess the wishes of the native population in Syria regarding postwar independence. The commission did not quite fit the reality of European politics—or, for that matter, American politics—and as Gelvin points out, it was not as idealistic as it seemed, since it simply reflected and transferred democratic elitism. After examining the King-Crane Commission from the Syrian perspective, Gelvin concludes that the commission actually established a pattern for subsequent US encounters with nationalism and state building in the Middle East that had unforeseen and often deleterious results for both the United States and the region.

The great divide of World War II awakened policymakers to the necessity of a more active and goal-oriented foreign policy commensurate with the onset of the Cold War and related regional issues. Yet there was a strong desire rooted in the American heritage to portray the United States as anything but a second-generation imperialist trying to trade places with the Europeans. This schizophrenia in US diplomacy toward what was then called the Third World in the immediate post–World War II period can particularly be seen in the Muhammad Mussadiq crisis of 1953, when covert efforts primarily engineered by the United States succeeded in overthrowing the popularly elected Iranian prime minister. At the time, Washington and London thought Mussadiq would tilt Iran toward the Soviet Union, which was viewed as an unacceptable strategic setback that could lead to a potentially disastrous superpower confrontation. The Mussadiq crisis reveals how the United States began almost instinctively to follow in the footsteps of British imperialism, demonstrating a preference for the status quo rather than the forces of change. This episode is examined in Chapter 3 by Mark Gasiorowski, who details—and is critical of—US policy in the matter. In an insert in the Gasiorowski chapter, Sir Sam Falle, a high-level official in the British embassy in Tehran at the time of the crisis, provides an on-the-ground viewpoint, and he maintains that US and British actions were correct, illuminating the at-times differing perspectives of historians looking backward and diplomats living forward.

Peter Hahn closes this section by offering a description of this transitional stage in US diplomacy toward the Middle East as strategic necessities of the Cold War became the paramount consideration. In Chapter 4, he examines Washington's relationship with Egypt from the last stage of the King Farouk regime to the early Nasserist period, ending with the Suez crisis and war in 1956.

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CHAPTER 1

AMERICANS AND THE MUSLIM WORLD

First Encounters

Robert J. Allison

Before the geographic area we now call the Middle East was called the Middle East, before the British colonies on the North American mainland became the United States, and before petroleum powered the world's economy, Americans and Muslims had a strange and profound encounter. This encounter was part of the long afterglow of the Crusades, as when English mercenary John Smith, fighting for the Austrians against the Ottoman Turks, was captured in Transylvania. Smith killed his Muslim captor and escaped, returning by way of Russia to England, which he left again, this time to sail west and found the colony of Jamestown. In 1645, as novelist and naval historian James Fenimore Cooper tells us, a ship built in Cambridge, Massachusetts, fought an Algerian ship in the Atlantic, in what Cooper called the first American naval battle. In the 1680s, New Yorkers raised money to redeem sailors captured in North Africa, and in 1700, an American sailor returned to Boston from captivity in Algiers. The Puritan clergy used his story of captivity and resistance to Islam to bolster the faith of their flocks.

THE MUSLIM WORLD AS COUNTERPOINT TO AMERICAN VALUES

Eighteenth-century American and European literature made the Muslim world a counterpoint to the idea of individual autonomy, the central feature of the emerging

American ideology. Political writers, such as John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in England, the authors of *Cato's Letters,* and Montesquieu in France, author of the *Persian Letters* and *Spirit of the Laws,* used Muslim states such as Morocco, Turkey, and Algiers as examples of how not to construct political societies. The American colonists who rebelled against England in 1776 and then set to forming their own political society had not only read these books but incorporated them into their way of thinking. In the Barbary states of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, at least as it was presented to them by European writers, Americans saw an example of the kind of political society they did not want to create.

Travelers and other observers saw signs of decay in Muslim societies, and Americans were determined to avoid the causes and thus prevent the symptoms. The most influential book on the subject was Constantin-François Volney's *The Ruins, or a Survey of the Revolution of Empires* (1792), a meditative reflection drawn from his travels in Egypt and Syria. *The Ruins* speculated on how the great Mesopotamian civilization came to collapse, and Volney found the answer in political intolerance fed by religious fanaticism. President Thomas Jefferson found Volney's *Ruins* so important that he undertook to translate it, enlisting the help of American diplomat and poet Joel Barlow.

This ideological picture of the Muslim world was colored by the experiences of American sailors held captive in Algiers, Tripoli, and Morocco. Between 1785 and 1815, a dozen American ships were captured by the North African states, which held the sailors hostage. This captivity forced American leaders to grapple with a variety of problems: What was the responsibility of the US government to its citizens? Should the United States pay ransom for citizens held captive? Should the United States pay tribute to foreign powers in order to protect its citizens? Different American leaders had different responses to these questions. John Adams calculated that paying tribute to Algiers would be less expensive than fighting a war, that Americans were the most reluctant people on earth to pay the kind of taxes that would be required to build a navy, and since Britain and France paid tribute to Algiers, there was no harm in Americans emulating their example. Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, believed it would be essential to American liberty to fight Algiers and Tripoli, not only to protect American citizens but to demonstrate to England and France that Americans were a different sort of people and would not engage in the kind of corrupt diplomacy of Europe. Jefferson's assertion of America's "difference" won the day, and one of his administration's first acts in 1801 was to send an American fleet to the Mediterranean to blockade Tripoli. The pope praised the American navy for subduing Tripoli, accomplishing what the Christian nations of Europe had been unable, or unwilling, to do.

The captivity of American sailors in Algiers raised another issue, one directly related to the idea that Americans were less corrupt and more noble than Europeans and that Americans had created a political society whose virtue would endure forever. The Americans who wrote about their captivity in Algiers called the experience slavery. The irony of Americans being held as "slaves" in Africa was lost on very few. Benjamin Franklin's last published work was a parody of a Georgia congressman's defense of African slavery in America, putting the Georgian's words in the mouth of a Muslim official justifying the enslavement of Christians in Algiers. Royall Tyler, author of the first American play, wrote a novel entitled *The Algerine Captive,* connecting American captivity in Algiers to American complicity in the African slave trade.[1]

American misunderstanding of the Muslim world rested on a profound ignorance of the Islamic religion, Muslim society, and the wild misinterpretations of the prophet Muhammad, who was known to eighteenth-century European and American writers as "Mahomet." Puritan minister Cotton Mather contrasted the liberty with which Europeans and Americans could reason with the tyranny of Muslim society. Heaven shone on "*our Parts of the Earth*" in allowing "Improvements of our *modern Philosophy,*" while no follower of the "thick-skull'd Prophet" was permitted to question the scientific truths revealed to Muhammad.[2]

We do not know where Mather learned about Muhammad, but the only English-language biography of Muhammad had been written in 1697 by Anglican clergyman Humphrey Prideaux. Prideaux's interest in Muhammad was only coincidental to his real purpose, which was to expose the folly of religious indifference. Prideaux had planned to write a major work on Constantinople's fall to the Muslims in 1453. But his growing alarm at the state of English society, the "giddy humour" with which too many young people embraced "fashion and vogue" rather than religion, and the ease with which men and women criticized the church alarmed Prideaux, and he wrote his book on Muhammad as a sober warning. Mecca had been a prosperous trading town, the people had been more attentive to their commercial interests than to their spiritual needs, they had allowed the faith of their fathers to degenerate, and Muhammad had exploited their religious laxity to impose his own religious and political agenda. The Muhammad emerging from Prideaux's work, and from the other English-language tracts on Islam, was an ambitious man. His ambition found a religious outlet, and the Meccan merchants' religious indifference allowed him to secure his religious tyranny.[3]

Prideaux's "Mahomet" was a warning sign in the young American republic of the 1790s. Many Americans welcomed the French revolution, which enshrined liberty and reason in the place of monarchy and tradition. But others worried about its consequences, and in France's revolution they saw anarchy that would ultimately be replaced by tyranny. Vice President John Adams reached back into French history, writing a series of essays warning about the consequences of anarchy and disorder. In England, Edmund Burke warned in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that liberty would be the victim of equality. Thomas Paine responded to Burke with his *The Rights of Man,* which seemed, on its arrival in America, to be as much an answer to Adams as to Burke. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson had an advance copy of Paine's pamphlet and sent it to the printer with a note praising Paine's attack on "the political heresies" that had lately sprung up, confident that "our citizens would rally again round the standard of common sense." Paine's book was printed in America with Jefferson's endorsement on the cover. American readers took Jefferson's jab at "political heresies" as a reference to Vice President Adams. In response to this perceived attack on Adams, his son, John Quincy, writing under the name Publicola, compared Jefferson to "the Arabian prophet" who called on "all true believers in the

Islam of democracy to draw their swords," and paraphrasing the Muslim creed "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet," the younger Adams had Jefferson and his zealous supporters shouting, "There is but one Goddess of Liberty, and Common Sense is her prophet."[4]

The situation seemed similar to that of seventh-century Mecca. Jefferson was a well-born, respectable man like Prideaux's Muhammad, but by countenancing the free thought of Thomas Paine and others, he would ultimately destroy the liberty he pretended to defend. In 1795, a Philadelphia publisher specializing in religious works published the first American edition of Prideaux's *Life of Mahomet,* and Prideaux's preface, warning of the dangers of infidelity and religious indifference, seemed especially pertinent in the new nation.

But this was not the only possible reading of Prideaux's *Mahomet.* The Adams administration, which took office in 1797, tried to quell the political storm by imposing a sedition act, making it a crime to criticize or bring ridicule upon the president. One of the fifteen victims of the act was Vermont congressman Matthew Lyon, who was sent to federal prison for suggesting that President Adams appointed men to office for their political loyalty rather than their accomplishments and that the president was fond of pomp and parade. (Lyon was reelected to Congress while in prison.) Having seen how far criticizing the president directly would take him, Lyon's son James, a printer, launched an indirect criticism. While his father was in jail, James Lyon published the second American edition of Prideaux's *Life of Mahomet,* this one without the preface warning of infidelity. Without this preface, the book takes on a different cast, and its Mahomet is a religious zealot who will tolerate no opposition and forbids "all manner of disputing about his religion," just as Adams and the Federalists had forbidden political disputes. Prideaux's conclusion could not have been more eloquently phrased for Lyon's purpose: "And certainly there could not be a wiser way devised for upholding of so absurd an imposture than by thus silencing, under so severe a penalty, all manner of opposition and disputes concerning it."[5] If Matthew Lyon had said this, his prison term would have been extended.

A second biography of Muhammad appeared in America in 1802, with the descriptive title *The Life of Mahomet; or, the History of that Imposture which was begun, carried on, and finally established by him in Arabia: and which has Subjugated a Larger Portion of the Globe, than the Religion of Jesus has yet set at Liberty.* The anonymous author found Islam to be "deeply affecting to a Philanthropic heart," as it degraded men and women "to the rank of brutes by the consummate artifice and wickedness" that had been created by one man, the prophet Muhammad. Islam had so depraved its adherents that this author thought they could be saved only by Christian conquest to free them from "that system of blasphemy and iniquity by which they are at present enslaved." Missionaries and teachers would be helpless against the rulers who used "carnal weapons" on their subjects and respected no argument but force.[6]

Muslim societies were more than distant symbols. In 1785 and 1793, Algiers captured a dozen American ships and held over one hundred American sailors captive. In this crisis, Susanna Rowson, an English actress living in America, wrote a play, *Slaves in Algiers, or a Struggle for Freedom.* Loosely basing it on Cervantes's *Il Cautivo,* Mrs. Rowson added a tangled family dynamic to make her story current with an

American audience. Although the Western characters Constant, Augustus, Olivia, and Rebecca are essential to the plot, the story centers on Fetnah, who has been sold into the dey's harem by her father, the merchant Ben Hassan, who began his career as a London rag merchant and had betrayed everything in his quest for wealth—he had left England for Algiers, had converted from Judaism to Islam, and finally had sold his daughter to the dey because he and Fetnah's mother "loved gold better than they did their child."[7]

Ben Hassan will do anything for money; Fetnah, though the dey's "chosen favorite," laments her imprisonment in the splendid palace. "I like them very well," she says of the luxuries surrounding her, "but I don't like to be confined." She asks, "[Is] the poor bird that is confined in a cage [because it is a favorite with its enslaver] consoled for the loss of freedom? No! tho' its prison is of golden wire, its food delicious, and it is overwhelmed with caresses, its little heart still pants for liberty: gladly would it seek the fields of air, and even perched upon a naked bough, exulting, carrol forth its song, nor once regret the splendid house of bondage."

Fortunately for Fetnah, at this moment Rebecca arrives in Algiers "from that land where virtue in either sex is the only mark of superiority. . . . She was an American." Rebecca, also consigned to the dey's seraglio, assures Fetnah that "woman was never formed to be the abject slave of man" and stirs Fetnah's natural love of liberty. Fetnah declares, "I feel that I was born free, and while I have life, I will struggle to remain so." Fetnah accepts the struggle, and the virtuous Americans even convince the dey to accept it, telling him to "sink the name of subject in the endearing epithet of fellow-citizen," and he agrees to "reject all power but such as my united friends shall think me incapable of abusing." The Americans tell the dey to prove by his conduct "how much you value the welfare of your fellow creatures," as they return to the land "where liberty has established her court," hoping for the day when "Freedom" will "spread her benign influence" through every nation.[8]

The Americans in Susanna Rowson's play are great teachers, instructing the dey how to be a better ruler and the people of Algiers how to be good citizens. The American war against Tripoli (1801–1805) gave Americans more opportunities to teach the lesson of American prowess and virtue. From the first naval engagement in August 1801 until the peace treaty was signed in June 1805, Americans regarded the war as a constant lesson in their own distinctive national character. President Jefferson was determined to cut the American military budget, to chastise Tripoli, and to do both as a lesson to European nations on proper modes of international conduct. Jefferson's decision to blockade Tripoli rather than launch a direct attack and to blockade using the smallest possible force led to disaster, as the *Philadelphia,* the second-largest ship in the American fleet, ran aground off Tripoli in October 1803. But the navy turned this disaster into a triumph, as Lieutenant Stephen Decatur and a small crew disguised themselves and a captured Tripolitan vessel and sailed into Tripoli harbor in February 1804, destroying the *Philadelphia* without losing a man. Americans saw Decatur's deed as evidence of their own prowess and courage. The naval bombardment of Tripoli in August 1804 gave further proof of American courage, and when Tripoli and the United States signed the treaty onboard the USS *Constitution* (the first time a Barbary state signed a treaty on an enemy warship), it confirmed for Americans their new place in the world.[9]

Barely a year after the war began, a play conveying this message was performed on the New York stage. No copies survive of *The Tripolitan Prize, or American Tars on an English Shore.* We know it only from a caustic review by Washington Irving. The American tars reach the English shore after being chased by a Tripolitan ship—it seems a violent storm in the Mediterranean sent both ships to the English Channel, where they fight it out. Improbable as this may have been, it allowed the Americans to win their battle against Tripoli within sight of England, and on the stage, crowds of Englishmen and women watched the American victory. Irving noted with sarcastic disgust that the American audience, particularly those in the galleries, spent the entire play "hallooing and huzzaing" the American captain and his crew onstage. The captain bellowed at one point, "What! an American Tar desert his duty!" and the American audience responded, "Impossible! American Tars forever! True blue will never stain!!" The battle, Irving wrote, was "conducted with proper decency and decorum," after which "the Tripolitan very politely gave in—as it would be indecent to conquer in the face of an American audience."[10]

We do not have such rich records of the audience response to other literature written in response to the Tripolitan War. But these cultural effusions—plays, poetry, novels, and paintings—all convey the same themes the audience celebrated in *The Tripolitan Prize* and *Slaves in Algiers.* Joseph Hanson's 1806 poem *The Musselmen Humbled, or a Heroic Poem in Celebration of the Bravery Displayed by the American Tars, in the Contest with Tripoli,* said that the Americans had won the war against Tripoli because they were armed with "the formidable powers of justice and freedom," which gave them "that invincible courage, which terrified and overcame the plundering vassals of the tyrannical bashaw." Hanson asked, "What can be effected by the slaves of tyrants? who fight for plunder and despotic masters: who defend no laws, but such as are oppressive; and protect no pow'r, but that which disrespects 'em."[11]

An 1812 play by Bostonian James Ellison, *The American Captive, or Siege of Tripoli,* saw this same reason for the American victory. In the play, Abdel Mahadi has seized power in Tripoli from his older brother, Ali ben Mahadi, who he said was too weak to rule. Ali was "too mild to reign"; he had "courted peace, and peace attain'd created heavy taxes!" Instead of peace, Ali should have "courted the crimson hand of war." Abdel, on the other hand, will use "*plunder*" to preserve his power and save his subjects from "that damn'd abyss, to which my brother's mild and milky reign had doom'd them." Plunder alone "can prop our sinking realm" and save it from the "misery and want" brought by peace. Ali's daughter, Immorina, and her fiancé lament this triumph of "*ambition*" over "*virtue,*" taking solace that while "*crime* may for a season triumph," only "*virtue*" can secure "a monarch's bliss, his count[r]y's welfare, and his subjects' love."[12]

As in Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers,* this debate on internal affairs is enriched by the arrival of American captives. In this play, one of Abdel's cruisers has captured an American ship. The arrival of Americans causes great excitement in Tripoli, as one Tripolitan woman asks Immorina, "Do you know what *Americans* are?" Immorina answers, "*Men,* are they not, like other men?" "Pshaw," the old woman says, the Americans are "*Indians!* Yes indeed, *Indians!*" They would scalp any man or woman they caught, "and I'm sure this proves them not to be *men.*" Immorina corrects her. The Indians, she says, are the natives of America but only "inhabit the western regions of that vast country, and are savage, and barbarous, like our wild Arabs." On the other hand, "those whom we denominate Americans" are like the Europeans in "customs and manners," are civilized, polished, enterprising, brave, and hospitable.[13]

The civilized, polished, enterprising, brave, and hospitable Americans are represented in this play by Captain Anderson, the captured master of the ship. Anderson and Abdel form a striking contrast of American and Tripolitan power. In their first meeting, Abdel is decked out in a "sumptuous Turkish habit," his turban decorated with a large diamond crescent, his jeweled sash barely hiding the dagger on his hip. Abdel asks Anderson if his father is a noble. Anderson replies, "If to be the son of him who served his country, in the time of peril, be that which you call noble, I am of the most noble extraction, but if, from pamper'd lords and vicious princes, alone descend the gift, then I am not." Anderson's father bore "the proudest title man can have"—he was "an honest man."[14]

Anderson contrasts not only with the corrupt and gaudy Abdel but also with other American characters in the play. Jack Binnacle, one of Anderson's crew, wonders why the United States does not simply "blow Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli up, and put an end to these nests of pirates?" Anderson applauds Binnacle's spirit and pledges to "fight till my heart-strings snap" rather than "be tributary to any nation," but he wants a permanent solution. Simply destroying the coastal cities would allow marauders like Abdel to move into the interior. Anderson wants to reform Tripoli so tyrants like Abdel cannot flourish. Anderson's plan, carried out with the help of Princess Immorina and the Jew Ishmael, is to escape from Tripoli and secure support from the navy for the deposed Ali, who will return to power and end the depraved power of Abdel once and for all.[15]

To the tune of "Washington's March," Anderson and Ali return to Tripoli, and Anderson prays "to be granted that heroic courage, that energy of soul, which so distinguish'd the father of my country, the matchless hero of the western world." Anderson kills the despotic Abdel, declaring that "*a slave* has power to strike a *tyrant* dead." Although Immorina tells Anderson that he now ranks "among the Prophets," the American is more interested in being placed alongside Washington.[16]

As in Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* and *The Tripolitan Prize,* Anderson in *The American Captive* teaches the Muslim tyrant a lesson. A contemporary American songwriter promised that if any despot dared insult the American flag, "We'll send them Decatur to teach them 'Good Manners.'"[17]

QUESTIONING AMERICA'S MORAL SUPERIORITY

And yet some American writers questioned the ability of their country to teach moral lessons to others. In the spring of 1787, while her father, the American minister to France, toured the southern part of that country, sixteen-year-old Martha Jefferson wrote to keep him informed of events in the world. Germany, Russia, and Venice, she reported, were at war against Turkey, and the plague had struck in Spain. She only briefly mentioned these world events, but then she found a story that captured her interest. "A virginia ship comming to spain," she wrote, "met with a [Algerian] corser of the same strength. They fought and the battle lasted an hour and a quarter. The Americans gained and boarded the corser where they found chains that had been prepared for them. They took them and made use of them for the algerians themselves." Martha saw the irony in this turn of events. But instead of relishing the American victory, she saw only compounded tragedy. "They returned to virginia from whence they are to go back to algers to change the prisoners to which if the algerians will not consent the poor creatures will be sold as slaves." The Algerians had wanted to enslave the Americans, a fact that might have justified their own enslavement. But not to Martha Jefferson, who asked her father, "Good god have we not enough? I wish with all my soul that the poor negroes were all freed. It greives my heart when I think that these our fellow creatures should be treated so terribly as they are by many of our countrymen."[18]

The capture of American sailors, who were put to work in Algiers or Tripoli, touched Americans' consciences. The plight of these "slaves" in Algiers and Tripoli stirred Americans to raise money for their redemption. Americans could boast that they had created a society different from the tyrannies of the Old World, but the captivity of Americans in North Africa reminded them that this was not the case. In Ellison's *The American Captive,* Jack Binnacle, a captive sailor, tells Hassan the overseer about America. "It's a charming place, Mr. Overseer; no *slavery* there! All free-born sons!" Hassan answers, "No Slavery, hey? Go where the Senegal winds its course, and ask the wretched mothers for their husbands and their sons! What will be their answer? *Doom'd to slavery, and in thy boasted country, too!*"[19]

A New England newspaper ran an item in 1794 headed "Profession versus Practice," a satire on fugitive slave ads and an attack on "ranting southern demagogues," like Thomas Jefferson, who preached "*universal equality*" while practicing "*piratical barbarity.*" The ad promised a reward for the return of an "American slave" to his master, "Ibrahim Ali Bey" of Algiers. It described the slave as an "ungrateful Villain" and "incorrigible infidel" who refused to renounce "his Christian errors" and had escaped with a "borrowed" manumission certificate. Freed slaves, the ad warned, were lending their freedom papers to other slaves, who used this "new invented species of *robbery*" to escape. How odd, the ad concluded, that these Christians would think this sharing was "*meritorious.* What strange, absurd ideas the Christians must have of *merit.*"[20]

The true story of a free black man helping an enslaved African escape appeared in several New England papers in 1795 and was paired with the story of an American captive redeemed from Algiers. Cato Mungo, reportedly an African prince, was returned by benevolent friends to Ouidah, in West Africa, and George Burnham, an American captain from New York, was ransomed by friends in 1794. Cato Mungo and George Burnham's stories were paired under the heading "Curses of Slavery," and the pairing made Burnham's suffering seem slight. Cato Mungo gave a "long and melancholy account of the treatment of the poor Africans in that land of cruelty" and suggested that Africans take "some measures" to redeem "such of our brethren as it would be in our power to restore to their families and connections." He repeated in horror that "several of the Royal family of this kingdom" were now "doing drudgery in the kitchens of the *United States!!!*"[21]

Cato Mungo had been helped to escape by Mawyaw, a free black man living in Connecticut, where slavery was still legal. Although slaves in Connecticut were treated more decently than were slaves in other states, they were still slaves. Mawyaw had helped Cato Mungo escape to Massachusetts, where slavery had been abolished in 1783. Connecticut's legislature had recently rejected an emancipation plan, Mawyaw reported, allowing "self-interest" to check its benevolence. Although the state was giving away millions of dollars' worth of public lands, "their souls were not large enough" to free African slaves. The legislators "did not think themselves justifiable in taking away the property of individuals," Mawyaw reported. He was not surprised: he noted that Americans "could not find in themselves generosity enough" to redeem their countrymen "now in slavery in the kingdom of Algiers." Americans were in no position to assert their moral superiority to the Algerians.

Benjamin Franklin's last published essay carried this same theme. Franklin, as president of Pennsylvania's antislavery society, had signed a petition to Congress in 1790 calling for an end to the slave trade. Franklin may have expected this to be his last public act. But a Georgia congressman, James Jackson, took to the floor of the House to denounce Franklin for suggesting that slavery was morally wrong. Jackson blasted Franklin and the Quakers, who had also submitted an antislavery petition, for being overzealous moral meddlers whose ignorant and misguided efforts at reform would undermine both the American economy and the well-being of the slaves. Slavery, Jackson said, was justified by religion, economics, politics, and history. The Georgians who enslaved Africans lifted their slaves out of barbarism and taught them the Christian virtues. If the slaves were freed, Jackson said, it would ruin Georgia's economy, since no one would work in the rice fields and these blacks would not work unless they were forced to do so. And what would happen to the freed people? They would not stay and work, and if they moved to the frontier, the Indians would kill them. Georgia's keeping of slaves was the benevolent option, as it taught slaves Christianity and allowed them to cultivate Georgia's rice.

Franklin read Jackson's speech in the *Federal Gazette* in March 1790. Franklin knew he had to reply. No American political leader had ever publicly said that slavery was a good thing: all had been committed to its extinction. Jackson's speech marked a change. Franklin knew he had to respond. Franklin had written his first newspaper essay more than seventy years earlier, had later tangled with Cotton Mather and the British ministry in print, and knew how to devastate an adversary. He wrote his response to Jackson under the name "Historicus" and said he liked Jackson's speech very much. It reminded him of something he had read many years before, a speech given by the dey of Algiers.

Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, the dey of Algiers, had given a speech similar to Jackson's in 1687. Franklin said he had read it in a book called *Martin's Account of his Consulship.*[22] The dey was provoked by a group of religious zealots, the Erika, or "Purists," who had petitioned Sidi Mehemet to abolish Christian slavery and piracy, which the Erika said were unjust and against the teachings of the Qur'an. Franklin then quoted

Sidi Mehemet's speech, which turned out to be James Jackson's speech, with Erika substituted for Quakers and Christian slaves substituted for Africans. James Jackson's argument justifying the slavery of Africans in America also justified the enslavement of Americans in Africa.

Algiers should not give up enslaving Christians, Sidi Mehemet warned, as it would ruin the nation's economy merely to gratify "the whims of a whimsical sect." He asked, "If we forbear to make slaves" of Christians, "who in this hot climate are to cultivate our lands? Must we not then be our own slaves?" As for the freed slaves, Sidi Mehemet and Jackson both feared they would not easily make the transformation to freedom. If the Christians stayed, they could not be considered the equals of Muslims. They would not "embrace our holy religion; they will not adopt our manners; our people will not pollute themselves by intermarrying with them."

They would become "beggars in our streets" and would pillage Algerian property. They would not work unless they were forced to do so, and if sent to the frontiers, they were too ignorant to establish a "good government" and would be massacred by wild Arabs. They were not to blame for their ignorance or weakness—these were traits they had brought with them from their backward homelands, where most peasants, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian, were treated as slaves. The Algerians had improved their lives by allowing them to work "where the sun of Islamism gives forth its light." Sending the freed people home would be denying them this benefit; it would send them "out of light into darkness."

After listening to Sidi Mehemet's arguments, the leaders of Algiers decided, according to Historicus, that to go on record as saying that slavery violated moral law was "at best *problematical.*" Algiers would hold on to slavery, and so, in 1790, would the United States. Franklin had made up the Erika, Sidi Mehemet, and *Martin's Account of his Consulship.* But unfortunately, he had not made up James Jackson. The similarities between Jackson's real speech and Sidi Mehemet's fictional one showed that "men's interests and intellects operate and are operated on with surprising similarity in all countries and climates, whenever they are under similar circumstances."

Franklin knew this better than most of his countrymen. They thought they had seen in the Muslim world all that they hoped to avoid in the new world: political and religious tyranny, subjugation of women, and craven self-interest. They also believed that they had created a political system that would prevent these evils, or at least hold them in check. Americans had developed an image of themselves and their society by looking at the Muslim world, holding an image of people and places that helped them, they thought, construct their own nation and identity. But Franklin told them their image of themselves was wrong, only partly because they carried in their heads a hopelessly distorted picture of Muslim history and society.

Notes

1. For more on these themes, see Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776–1820* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ray Watkins Irwin, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers, 1776–1816* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1931); and James Field, *America and the Mediterranean*

World, 1776–1882 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969). On the general perceptions of Islam in the West, see Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993).

2. Cotton Mather, "The Christian Philosopher" [1721], reprinted in *Cotton Mather* (n.p.).

3. Humphrey Prideaux, *The History of the Life of the Great Imposter Mahomet* (Philadelphia: Stewart and Cochran, 1796), 2–3.

4. Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 438, 440.

5. Humphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture, Fully Displayed in the Life of Mahomet* (Fairhaven, VT: James Lyon, 1798), 76–77.

6. *The Life of Mahomet; or, the History of that Imposture which was Begun Carried on, and Finally Established by Him in Arabia; and Which has Subjugated a Larger Potion of the Globe, than the Religion of Jesus has Yet Set at Liberty. To Which is Added, an Account of Egypt* (Worcester, MA: n.p., 1802), 83–84, 85.

7. Susanna Haswell Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers, or a Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1794), 5.

8. Ibid., 9–10, 65–68, 71, 72.

9. For a striking example of this, see the song written by Francis Scott Key honoring the heroes of Tripoli, which in verse and cadence became the foundation of "The Star-Spangled Banner," which he wrote a few years later during the War of 1812 against England. Allison, 204–206.

10. Irving's review from the *New York Morning Chronicle,* quoted in William Dunlap, *History of the American Theatre* (New York: J. and J. Harper, 1832), 301–302.

11. Joseph Hanson, *The Musselmen Humbled, or a Heroic Poem in Celebration of the Bravery Displayed by the American Tars, in the Contest with Tripoli* (New York: n.p., 1806), 3, 7–9.

12. James Ellison, *The American Captive, or Siege of Tripoli* (Boston: n.p., 1812), 9, 12, 35.

13. Ibid., 24–25.

14. Ibid., 20–21.

15. Ibid., 18–19, 37–38.

16. Ibid., 34, 51.

17. *New York Evening Post,* 15 March 1806.

18. Martha Jefferson to Thomas Jefferson, Paris, 3 May 1787, in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson,* Julian Boyd et al., eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 11:334.

19. Ellison, *American Captive,* 37–38.

20. "Profession vs. Practice," Boston *Federal Orrery,* 24 November 1794; Boston *Mercury,* 25 November 1794; Newburyport *Morning Star,* 26 November 1794.

21. "Curses of Slavery," *Rural Magazine, or Vermont Repository,* March 1795, 118–124. Cato Mungo's story was reprinted in Salem *Gazette,* 13 January 1795; Boston *Federal Orrery,* 29 January 1795; Portsmouth *Oracle of the Day,* 31 January 1795. For African Muslims enslaved in America, see Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

22. Benjamin Franklin, "On the Slave Trade," in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin,* Jared Sparks, ed. (London: Benjamin Franklin Stevens, 1882), 2:517–521.

CHAPTER 2

THE IRONIC LEGACY OF THE KING-CRANE COMMISSION

James Gelvin

In the immediate aftermath of World War I, a US observer in Syria wrote:

> Without visiting the Near East, it is not possible for an American to realize even faintly, the respect, faith and affection with which our Country is regarded throughout that region. Whether it is the world-wide reputation which we enjoy for fair dealing, a tribute perhaps to the crusading spirit which carried us into the Great War, not untinged with the hope that the same spirit may urge us into the solution of great problems growing out of that conflict, or whether due to unselfish or impartial missionary and educational influence exerted for a century, it is the one faith which is held alike by Christian and Moslem, by Jew and Gentile, by prince and peasant in the Near East.[1]

If, during the three-quarters of a century that have passed since these words were written, those who have chronicled the relations between the United States and the nations of the Middle East have had few, if any, opportunities to repeat our observer's findings, they can at least take solace from the fact that the goodwill that may have existed seventy-five years ago has been dissipated precisely because of US intervention in the "great problems" engendered by the destruction of the Ottoman Empire.

The first official US foray into the politics of the post-Ottoman Middle East came about as the result of a suggestion made by President Woodrow Wilson to the Council of Four entente powers (France, Great Britain, the United States, and Italy) assembled in Paris to determine the terms of peace. In an attempt to resolve an acrimonious dispute between Britain and France over the future disposition of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Wilson suggested the formation of an interallied commission on Syria. The commission would travel to the Middle East "to elucidate the state of opinion and the soil to be worked on by any mandatory. They should be asked to come back and tell the Conference what they found with regard to these matters. . . . If we were to send a Commission of men with no previous contact with Syria, it would, at any rate, convince the world that the Conference had tried to do all it could to find the most scientific basis possible for a settlement."[2] Although both France and Britain acquiesced to the idea of the commission, neither power appointed delegates to participate in its activities. As a result, the commission became a US commission and thus has been commonly referred to by the names of its two commissioners, Henry Churchill King, president of Oberlin College in Ohio, and Chicago businessman and Democratic Party activist Charles R. Crane. King and Crane traveled to Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Anatolia in the summer of 1919 to meet with local representatives. Their findings, filed with the US delegation at Paris, were subsequently ignored by the peace negotiators.

Diplomatic historians have usually cited the King-Crane Commission as either an example of US naïveté in the face of European realpolitik or a representation of the principles that differentiate the "new diplomacy" from the old. In reality, the legacy of the commission is far more complex. Although the commission's impact on entente policy was doomed from the beginning by a variety of factors—a confusion of secret agreements, historic claims, and postwar realities; the Parti Colonial in France and the Republican Party in the United States; and the British realization that "the friendship of France is worth ten Syrias"—contemporary students of US foreign policy can draw two lessons from the story of the commission.[3] The first lesson is that in diplomacy, as in physics, neutral observers do not exist; rather, a world power necessarily influences the object of its interest simply by turning its attention to it, defining it as a problem to be solved, and then framing the possible terms for its solution. Second, a review of the effects of the visit of the King-Crane Commission on the Syrian population underscores the need for US policymakers to reassess the preconceptions and misapprehensions that have guided them, often with disastrous results, when formulating policies that deal with nation building and nationalism.[4]

THE DOCTRINE OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

During World War I and the subsequent peace negotiations, the French, British, and US governments all made declarations that indicated support for self-determination for the peoples of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, however, all three governments committed themselves to policies that made true self-determination impossible.

For Woodrow Wilson, the liberation of peoples and postwar self-determination were sine qua nons for US participation in the war. From December 1917 through September 1918, Wilson delivered a series of addresses, enunciating US principles in Fourteen Points (January 8, 1918), Four Supplementary Points (February 11, 1918), Four Additional Points (July 4, 1918), and Five Additional Points (September 27, 1918). "Self-determination," Wilson warned, "is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril."[5] In Point Twelve of the original Fourteen Points, Wilson directly addressed the status of Turks and non-Turks in the Ottoman Empire, promising the latter "an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development."[6]

Stung by the revelation of secret agreements reached during the war for a colonial-style division of the Ottoman Empire, and wishing to allay the doubts of Arab nationalists who suspected entente perfidy, France and Britain adopted Wilson's call for self-determination for the inhabitants of the Middle East. On November 9, 1918, they issued the following joint declaration, which they distributed throughout liberated Syria: "The object aimed at by France and Great Britain in prosecuting in the East the War let loose by the ambition of Germany is the complete and definite emancipation of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations."[7]

In the same statement, however, the two powers displayed their ambivalence to the principle of self-determination by making their support for the doctrine conditional on the acceptance by the indigenes of guidance from "advanced nations":

> In order to carry out these intentions France and Great Britain are at one in encouraging and assisting the establishment of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia, now liberated by the Allies, and in the territories the liberation of which they are engaged in securing and recognising these as soon as they are actually established.
>
> Far from wishing to impose on the populations of these regions any particular institutions they are only concerned to ensure by their support and by adequate assistance the regular working of Governments and administrations freely chosen by the populations themselves. To secure impartial and equal justice for all, to facilitate the economic development of the country by inspiring and encouraging local initiative, to favour the diffusion of education, to put an end to dissensions that have too long been taken advantage of by Turkish policy, such is the policy which the two Allied Governments uphold in the liberated territories.

For many Arab nationalists, particularly those who had preferred sitting out the war in Egypt to joining the British-inspired Arab Revolt of Sharif Hussein and his sons, the Anglo-French statement appeared to be little more than a rationalization for a thinly veiled colonialism.[8] As if to confirm their suspicions, French president Georges Clemenceau visited London in December 1918, where, in the words of

British prime minister Lloyd George, it was "agreed that Syria should go to France [as a mandate] and Mesopotamia to Great Britain."[9] To mollify the French further, the British (as well as the United States) disavowed any interest in Syria in a meeting of the Council of Four held three days before the peace conference authorized the assignment of mandates in the region.

Whereas the French and British attitude toward both self-determination for the inhabitants of the region and the King-Crane Commission was thus clear, US support for both was surprisingly ambiguous. Its European allies might easily have argued that the United States had, on several occasions, already placed its imprimatur on their wartime and postwar arrangements for the region. After all, not only had Woodrow Wilson issued a statement of support for the Balfour Declaration in September 1918 without bothering to ascertain the attitude of the inhabitants of Palestine toward the establishment of a Jewish homeland in their midst, but one month later he approved the official US Department of State commentary on the Fourteen Points, which recognized the preeminent position of France in Syria and affirmed that Britain was "clearly the best mandatory for Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Arabia."[10] Little wonder, then, that Henry King and Charles Crane, in a memorandum written to the US president before their tour of the Middle East, argued that the mandate for Syria should go to France "frankly based, not on the primary desires of the people, but on the international need of preserving friendly relations between France and Great Britain," or that, within a week of proposing the commission, Wilson had, according to Ray Stannard Baker, a close associate and head of the US press bureau in Paris, "clean forgotten" about it.[11]

Support among the entente powers for the activities of the commission thus ranged from lackluster to dismissive. The commission's recommendations were nonbinding, and even if the commission were to find, as it did, that Syrian public opinion supported a united Syria and (in ranked order) no mandate, a US mandate, and a British mandate, all three options had already been foreclosed.[12] It was in this context that Lloyd George, like the proverbial western sheriff who remarked, "First we give him a fair trial, then we hang him," urged his French colleague to support the activities of the commission, but "first let us agree [about the disposition of territory] between ourselves."[13]

THE US PERSPECTIVE ON SELF-DETERMINATION AND PUBLIC OPINION

Not only did decisions made in Paris preclude the possibility that the King-Crane Commission would influence entente policy, but preconceptions held by both the commissioners and their president—preconceptions about democracy, progress, public opinion, and nationalism that both underlay the commission's flawed procedure and circumscribed the range of its possible findings—impeded the commission's ability truly to "elucidate the state of opinion and the soil to be worked on by any mandatory" in Syria.

The extent to which his father's Calvinism shaped Woodrow Wilson's worldview and principles of his foreign policy is a well-worn cliché.[14] But because Wilson was a historian as well as the son of a Presbyterian minister, he tempered his belief in a mankind tainted by original sin with the optimism implicit in the Whiggism common to the academic milieu from which he emerged. History, for Wilson, was the chronicle of liberty—"the enlargement of the sphere of independent action at the expense of dictatorial authority."[15] From the Greek polis and the confrontation at Runnymede through the ratification of the US Constitution, human progress could thus be measured in two ways: by the multiplication of the personal freedoms available to the (Anglo-Saxon) heirs of this tradition, and by the spread of democracy—the political correlate to this tradition—throughout the world.

In his writings, Wilson argued that the expansion of international trade, print media, and, most important, public education during the previous century had created an autonomous realm of public opinion in most nations that facilitated the global diffusion of democratic ideals and structures.[16] Wilson's definition of public opinion thus differed dramatically from the definition used by his German idealist contemporaries: rather than being the repository of common sense ("all-pervasive fundamental ethical principles disguised as prejudices"), Wilson's public opinion was an *informed* public opinion shaped by the most enlightened strata of society.[17] This was the public opinion upon which the doctrine of self-determination rested, the public opinion that Wilson charged the King-Crane Commission to elucidate.

The members of the King-Crane Commission shared Wilson's understanding about the nature of public opinion. Their fact-finding consisted of holding audiences with, and receiving petitions drafted by, those whom they considered to be the most important and most representative Middle East opinion makers: thirty-four mayors and municipal councils, fifteen administrative councils, sixty-five councils of village chiefs, thirty Arab shaykhs, seventeen professional and trade organizations, and so on. It should not be surprising, therefore, that in its final report the commission advocated strengthening Syrian nationalism through an expansion of education "in clear recognition of the imperative necessity of education for the citizens of a democratic state and the development of a sound national spirit."[18]

Although members of the King-Crane Commission disagreed about the extent to which the Syrian population was prepared for self-determination and how long "the systematic cultivation of national spirit" in Syria would take, all agreed on the liberal and secular foundations on which Syrians had to base their nationalism. In the conclusion to its final report, the commission recommended imposing a mandate on Syria but optimistically predicted that the period during which a mandatory power would have to oversee Syrian affairs might be brief. According to the report, mandatory control could be relinquished as soon as the leaders of the Syrian nationalist movement demonstrated their sincerity in midwifing a modern democratic nation-state that protected the rights of minorities:

> The western world is already committed to the attempt to live in peace and friendship with the Moslem peoples, and to manage governments in such a way as to separate politics from religion. Syria offers an excellent opportunity to establish a state where members of the three great monotheistic religions can live together in harmony; because it is a country of one

> language, which has long had freedom of movement and of business relations through being unified under the Turkish rule. Since now the majority declare for nationalism, independent of religion, it is necessary only to hold them to this view through mandatory control until they shall have established the method and practice of it. Dangers may readily arise from unwise and unfaithful dealings with this people, but there is great hope of peace and progress if they be handled frankly and loyally.[19]

In contrast to the findings of the commissioners, the reports filed by William Yale, one of two technical advisers attached to the King-Crane Commission, cast doubt on the short-term "possibility of developing among the people of Syria a national spirit upon the community of language which exists, the similarity of race, the sense of economic dependence, and the germ of nationalism." Yale predicted disaster without a long-term and energetic mandatory presence in Syria:

> There is a liberal movement among the Syrian Moslems, a movement which under proper guidance and with proper assistance may be able to awaken a new spirit in the younger generation, might have been able to lessen the fanaticism not only of the effendi class but of the lower classes. At the present time this liberal movement was too feeble, too weak in numbers and conviction . . . to rally to their support the ignorant fanatical masses which are swayed by the Ulemas and the Young Arab Party.[20]

Ironically, the very search by members of the King-Crane Commission for their counterparts in Syrian society directly (and adversely) affected the latter's ability to shape Syrian public opinion. Those whom Yale entrusted to nurture "liberal nationalism" naturally believed, like the commissioners, that educational achievement or professional status entitled them to play a special role in nation building. While actively courting the commissioners, this grouping simultaneously sought to convince the Syrian population that, having achieved the approbation of the commission, it would secure Syrian independence through negotiation and compromise—if not absolute independence, then at least independence under the benevolent guidance of the Americans or British. The refusal by the entente powers to accept the recommendations of the King-Crane Commission destroyed the credibility of this sodality within the nationalist movement and thus assured the emergence of a new and very different kind of nationalist leadership.

THE "LIBERAL MOVEMENT"

The thin strata of society behind what William Yale (ingenuously) identified as the "liberal movement" had emerged in Syria as the result of two processes that had, over the course of the half century that preceded the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, increasingly determined institutions and social relationships in the Arab Middle East. Both the accelerating rate of integration of the region into the world economy and attempts made by the Ottoman government to rationalize and strengthen central control increased the salience of capitalist relations and encouraged their diffusion (albeit unevenly) throughout the empire. These effects, in turn, not only induced the reconstruction and/or enlargement of certain previously existing social classes but also prompted the emergence of new social classes as well. Members of two of these classes, often intertwined through reciprocal ties of interest and/or consanguinity, formed the core of Yale's "liberal movement": the so-called middle strata, comprising intellectuals, trained military officers, professionals, and so on, who were necessary to implement Ottoman "modernization" and state-building policies, and a reconstituted urban notability whose economic and political status was increasingly based on a combination of landownership and good relations with Istanbul.[21]

Two types of bonds united these groups with their counterparts in the West. Because both the formation of the middle strata and the post-1860 transformation of the urban notability depended upon the spread of peripheral capitalism and modern institutions of governance in the Middle East, the categories used by these groups to organize the world and their society were coherent with the categories used by analogous groups—both in the metropole and in other peripheral areas—who benefited from, or whose origins can be traced to, the worldwide expansion of capitalism. In addition, elective ties of affinity, nurtured through, for example, education, religious affiliation, and/or wartime experiences, often linked members of these groups to their European counterparts. These natural and emulative bonds not only account for the strategies used by these newly empowered groups to craft state institutions in post-Ottoman Syria but also explain why, during the same period, an influential bloc readily worked within the parameters set by the Paris Peace Conference in an attempt to win Syrian independence.

The Arab government that was established in Damascus at the close of World War I depended upon individuals from these groups to administer the territory of inland Syria and to mobilize the support of the indigenous population. Working both within the government and through allied political and cultural organizations (the most important of which were al-Fatat, the Arab Club *[al-nadi al-'arabi],* and the Literary Society *[al-muntada al-adabi]),* the self-proclaimed elite within the nationalist movement (labeled in their own writings the *mutanawwirun, mustanirun,* or *mufakkirun*) designed governmental and extragovernmental institutions to expand the authority of the state, reorganize traditional structures within civil society, introduce mores and values compatible with or derived from those of Europe, and inculcate new national myths and symbols among the population.[22] In a report written in November 1919, for example, British traveler Gertrude Bell described her visit to one such institution, the School for the Daughters of Martyrs *(madrasat banat al-shuhada),* which was established in Damascus to educate orphans whose fathers had died during the Arab Revolt. According to Bell, the school

> is run on private subscriptions by a committee of ladies presided over by Naziq bint al 'Abid, a girl of 21 belonging to one of the best families of Damascus. She is a niece of 'Izzat Pasha, who was the all-powerful Secretary of Abdul Hamid for a period of years, during which he earned great

> wealth and the bitter recriminations of the C.U.P. [Committee of Union and Progress] when it came into the saddle. In spite of their threats Izzat managed to escape to Europe, where he had already lodged a respectable part of his fortune. Sitt Naziq was educated in a mission school at Beyrut, speaks English, and is the most advanced lady in Damascus. She and her mother sat unveiled among a company of men, a select company, but none of them related to the ʿAbid family. Another Mohammadan lady of the committee was present, and she also was unveiled. . . . The mistresses were mostly Christians educated in Beyrut and speaking fairly good English. Besides the orphans there were an equal number of girls of good Damascene families who pay for the education they receive. These girls 16 to 18 years old, were not seen by the men of the party. Girls and children were brought out into the large garden which surrounds the house to sing patriotic songs. In one of them a chorus of the elder girls addressed the orphans, reminding each one that her father died in the cause of liberty and bidding her never to forget that she was "bint ul ʿArabi," while the children replied that they would never forget their birth, nor King Husain who fought for their race, nor finally (this stanza was specially prepared for the US Commission) President Wilson who laid down—save the mark—the principles of freedom.[23]

A more comprehensive picture of the attitudes and activities of like-minded *mutanawwirun* during the period preceding the visit of the King-Crane Commission to Damascus is displayed in an unusual parable entitled "The True Vision," which was published on the front page of the official gazette of the Arab government in May 1919.[24] The fantasy begins with a description of the author at his desk, contemplating the news of demonstrations held in Egypt to show popular support for Egyptian independence: "We hardly see such good order in the demonstrations of the most advanced Western nations. I said to myself, 'By God! They unjustly accuse the East and its people of savagery, immaturity, and an inability to imitate the civilization of the West. What is more indicative of their readiness [for independence] than this admirably ordered and perfect demonstration?'" Troubled by his meditations and by concerns about the upcoming visit of the King-Crane Commission to Damascus, the author falls asleep. His dreams transport him to an unfamiliar Middle East location where the inhabitants speak classical Arabic and dress in traditional attire. In the tent of their chieftain lies a strange mechanism and two mirrors: one mirror reflects the past, the other forecasts the future. The author, having begged the apparition for a glimpse of the future, spends the remainder of the dream watching upcoming events unfold, "like in a movie."

The author's first vision is of the near future. On the eve of the arrival of the King-Crane Commission, "the people of distinction and their intellectuals" *(ʿilyat al-qawm wa mufakkiruhum),* assembled in a general congress, make preparations to convince the commission that the Syrian population is mature (the words *madani, umrani,* and *adabi* are used throughout the article) and therefore merits independence. To accomplish this, as the parable continues, the delegates plan to use locally based artisan guilds and patriotic clubs to organize demonstrations similar to those of Egypt and to distribute placards among the population calling for complete independence:

> In conformity with this plan each citizen placed a sign on his forearm and on his breast on which was printed "We demand complete independence." Shop owners placed signs with this slogan written in English and Arabic on their shops. Hardly had these plans been made when all inhabitants—regardless of religion, sect, and nationality—showed these placards . . . and one could not walk down the street without seeing the signs on every building and wall. As the size of demonstrations swelled, the people daubed this slogan on the tarbooshes of small boys and embroidered it on the frontlets of small girls. I laughed when I saw a bald man with the slogan written on his head. I saw the owners of carriages and horses who placed this slogan on the faces of their horses and the sweets-sellers put the slogan on the lids of containers of sweets and milk. I was truly amazed when I saw the work of the residents of Salhiyye—they spelled out this slogan with lanterns on Mt. Qasiun by night in letters that could be read for seven miles. The people kept up this sort of activity until the delegation left Damascus.

Impressed by the "intelligence, advancement, and worthiness for independence" of Syrians, the King-Crane Commission returns to Paris and convinces the peace conference to offer the Syrians independence. Under the benevolent leadership of Faisal, now king of Syria, and guided by a new congress, presumably composed of the same notables and intellectuals who had convened in the previous congress, the nation can now enjoy the fruits of its independence:

> I saw . . . the people now turning their attention to the founding of schools and colleges until no village remained without an excellent primary school. I saw prosperity spreading throughout the country and railroads connecting populous villages and farms. I saw farmers using the most modern agricultural techniques, extensive trade, and flourishing industry. Damascus appeared to me to be the most advanced of cities in terms of its construction. Its streets and lanes were paved with asphalt and the Barada River was like the Seine, traversing the city from east to west. On its banks was a corniche on which towering buildings stood. I saw Aleppo: its water, brought by canals from the Euphrates, sustained its gardens and parks and anointed its waterless desert. . . . Factories were founded throughout the kingdom so that the country had no need for manufactured goods from the West, but instead exported its products to China, India, and Africa. Its people grew rich, its power increased, and it moved to the forefront of advanced nations.

As is common with prophetic narratives, the accuracy of the dreamer's vision increasingly fades the further it advances into the future. Much of what the author wrote about imminent events did transpire as foretold. The Syrian General Congress, composed primarily of representatives whose backgrounds placed them among the "people of distinction," met in early June 1919 to formulate a consentient list of demands to be presented to the US commission.[25] The Arab government distributed *khutab* (sermons) to be read at Friday prayers and, in conjunction with political and cultural associations and government-sanctioned guilds, sponsored petition campaigns and mobilized demonstrations in support of the "Damascus Program" promulgated by the congress.[26] Local political activists and *makhatir* (government officials assigned to quarters within cities) ensured that shopkeepers throughout Syria placarded their storefronts with the slogan "We demand complete independence."[27] However, the long-term vision for Syria espoused by the author—a vision suffused with Eurogenic ideals and expressed through an alien discourse—not only failed to materialize but proved to be far removed from the concerns of the vast majority of the Syrian population.

With adequate resources, it might have been possible for the Arab government and its allies gradually to enlist the support of the Syrian population for its "true vision": the *mutanawwirun* not only enjoyed the requisite social prestige to attract the spontaneous consent of nonelites, but because of their access to institutions of governance, they possessed potentially formidable coercive powers as well. However, on September 13, 1919, the British government decided to reduce its substantial subsidy to the Arab government by half and to withdraw its forces from Syria. This decision undercut both the economic and the political positions of the Arab government and its allies and generated a crisis from which they never recovered.[28] Widely interpreted as portending French rule in Syria ("protection and mandate are synonyms, and are the precursors to annexation"), the action seemed to confirm the bankruptcy of the plan to achieve the complete independence of Syria through negotiation.[29] Almost overnight, the slogan "Complete independence for Syria within its natural boundaries, no protection, tutelage, or mandate *(la himaya, la wisaya, wa la intidab)*" replaced its shorter but obviously inadequate predecessor on placards posted throughout Syria.[30]

THE RESPONSE OF NONELITES TO THE FAILURE OF THE COMMISSION

The enemy have cloaked themselves in hypocrisy, and
enfolded it in rancor and hatred.
They took an oath of loyalty and they were disloyal,
and from among them you have trusted some as
allies who were treacherous. . . .
What is amiss with those who have carried the scales of
guidance on their arms, that they have failed to
discern the truth?
If they do not help those who need help and bring
success to those who deserve it, then let the
scales be broken.

—Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli[31]

For many in the Arab Middle East, the expansion of capitalist relations and the reorganization of imperial institutions that had taken place during the seventy years preceding the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire induced social changes that ranged from disorienting to calamitous. Not only did the status of those local elites who lacked landed wealth and/or bureaucratic connections decline, but rivalry intensified among established and emergent elites for highly coveted posts in the reinvigorated state bureaucracy. The spread of capitalism frequently transformed peasant life: peasants often found themselves at the mercy of usurers, planted cash crops for export, and supplemented family incomes by participating, sometimes seasonally, sometimes permanently, in the urban labor force. Coastal cities and extramural urban areas expanded, and newcomers to cities frequently settled in neighborhoods (such as the Maydan in Damascus and al-Kallasa in Aleppo) that lacked homogeneity and established social structures. New demands made by the state (such as the universally loathed conscription), agricultural crises, alterations in patterns of land tenure, conflicts on the periphery of the empire and World War I, and postwar inflation and rural insecurity further disrupted the lives of nonelites.

The social and economic shocks experienced by both nonelites and former elites had two relevant effects. First, because the expansion of market relations and the intrusion of a uniform apparatus of power into previously unregulated or underregulated domains increasingly determined the nature and extended the scope of ties among Syrians, the significance of horizontal, associational, and national linkages among the population grew at the expense of vertical, communal, and parochial bonds—a necessary precondition for "proactive" collective activity and what historian George Mosse calls the "nationalization of the masses."[32] Second, the social and economic shocks engendered an ideological backlash among the self-described "aggrieved" *(mankubun),* who frequently expressed their disaffection through a populist discourse that extolled the historic ties and common interests that united Syrians into an egalitarian national community, celebrated the central role played by nonelites in preserving "traditional" values, and affirmed the integrity of community boundaries.[33]

Starting in September 1919, populist activists—disempowered notables, merchants, *qabadayat* (local toughs), *ulama,* petit-bourgeois merchants/*ulama,* and so on—took advantage of the opportunities for mobilization that both the prolonged social transformations and the immediate economic and political crises provided to create the structures necessary for a sustainable populist movement.[34] Over the course of the next nine months, these activists founded an array of interconnected organizations (the most important of which were the Higher National Committee *[al-lajna al-wataniyya al-'ulya],* based in Damascus, and local committees of national defense *[lijan al-difa' al-watani]*) that challenged the authority of the crippled Arab government, the discredited *mutanawwirun,* and the representatives of the entente powers meeting in Paris.

The populist organizations attracted widespread support, particularly among the Sunni Muslim population of inland Syria, for several reasons. As described earlier, in anticipation of the arrival of the King-Crane Commission in Syria, the Arab government and its extragovernmental allies applied modern techniques for mass mobilization that had, even before the founding of the populist organizations, acclimated much of the population to participation in national politics. But where the Arab government attempted to reach a settlement with the entente powers through negotiation and compromise, the populist organizations preached the more popular doctrine of militant anti-imperialism and marshaled and/or supplied local volunteer militias and guerrilla bands to resist mandatory authority. The organizations connected individuals to a national political machine through neighborhood and village branch organizations and supervisory committees *(al-lijan al-far'iyya, al-lijan al-taftishiyya)* and promoted participation by sponsoring electoral campaigns, demonstrations, military exercises, and charitable activities. Finally, the populist organizations assumed responsibility for services—protecting and provisioning urban quarters, assessing taxes, licensing monopolies, ensuring a "fair price" for grain, providing relief for the indigent and families of soldiers—which the local notability and the Arab government could no longer provide.

In contrast to the anonymous dreamer and his colleagues—who were willing to accept a temporary mandate in exchange for technological assistance and the accouterments of civilization—populist spokesmen articulated a vision for Syria that met the concerns of "the great mass of the nation [that] is not confined to the educated, the notables, and the merchants of the cities who read the daily newspapers, follow international and domestic politics, and are concerned with scientific discoveries and technological innovation."[35] Scornful of the aspirations of the Westernized elites ("[The French] only want to possess the sources of wealth and turn the free population into slaves in the name of progress, and only the Syrians [will] feel the effects"), populist spokesmen eschewed the dichotomization of Syrian society inherent in "A True Vision"—a dichotomization that stigmatized and alienated a vast majority of the population by pitting the cultured and educated formulators of public opinion against the passive nonelites—and expounded a vision of Syria that was both comprehensive and inclusive.[36] Populist organizers thus counterpoised their own definition of public opinion to the definition used by Woodrow Wilson and his epigones in Syria:

> The people possess a spirit which transcends the inclinations of individuals . . . and the nation possesses an independent personality stronger than the personalities of its members. . . . Those who would penetrate the heart of the Syrian people . . . know that public opinion is made from two sources: the first is its historical traditions in which there is strong faith and fidelity. This is fixed and immutable at its core, and even though it changes form it is imperishable and indestructible. The old illiterate, the religious 'alim, the cultured youth all equally respect historical traditions and aspire to the general goal. . . . The people compel outside influences to be compatible with their traditions, and they desire to harmonize the elements of public opinion by making the second element compatible with the first, that is, with historic tradition.[37]

The aggressive posture assumed by the leaders of the populist movement and the potential empowerment of their constituents alarmed both foreign observers and the *mutanawwirun.* Populist rhetoric, suffused with Islamic and apocalyptic images and embellished with anecdotes that described the treachery of "those who would sell the nation like merchandise," foreign conspiracies, French and Zionist atrocities, the defilement of Muslim innocents, and exculpatory vengeance, aroused their apprehensions as well. "Over 90% of the Moslems of Syria are ignorant and fanatical, and can be swayed by their religious leaders," reported William Yale. "They are profoundly anti-Christian and anti-foreign and can be easily led to excesses by the recognized leaders, the clergy, land owners, and tribal chiefs."[38] Similarly, in a letter addressed to a former finance minister, a physician working in the foreign ministry of the Arab government depicted the populist movement as a form of mass pathology: "Individual dementia is among the greatest afflictions I know, but worse still is the complete dementia of a nation. . . . I am not a prophet, yet I see the end result very clearly if the transgressors do not return to their senses."[39]

The transgressors did not, of course, "come to their senses." To the contrary, worsening economic conditions, widening border warfare, the demands made by an apparently incompetent yet increasingly rapacious Arab government, and the announcement of the decision made by the entente powers at San Remo in April 1920 (to divide Syria and impose mandates) boosted support for the populist movement and the organizations it spawned while further undermining the authority of the Arab government and the counsel of the *mutanawwirun.* When the Arab government finally acquiesced to a French ultimatum that threatened unspecified "acts" unless the government accepted a French mandate, antigovernment rioting—which left scores dead in Damascus and hundreds dead in Aleppo—erupted throughout Syria. In the aftermath of this final display of the "state of opinion and the soil to be worked on by any mandatory," the French army marched on Damascus and France began its quarter-century occupation of inland Syria—one year to the day after the departure of the King-Crane Commission from the Middle East.

CONCLUSION: THE KING-CRANE COMMISSION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SYRIAN NATIONALISM

> In truth, the politics which followed in Syria were very strange, inasmuch as the intellectuals—the men of public opinion—and the men of the government themselves stirred up, by all means possible, the excitement of the people and pushed it to the extreme. Then, all of a sudden, they retreated before the slightest obstacle which blocked their way, and they abandoned the people who were perplexed, not knowing how to explain their position. . . . This created a situation of enormous emotional turmoil and squandered the trust which the people had placed in their leaders. They openly accused their leaders of treachery to the point that, gradually, that trust was dissolved, and the leaders to whom the people had entrusted the reins of government were not able to lead and they were scoffed at.
>
> —**As'ad Daghir**[40]

Following World War I, revolutionary violence convulsed much of the non-Western world, from Turkey through India to China and Korea. The situation in the Arab Middle East was no different, with conflagrations erupting in Egypt (1919), Syria (1919–1920), and Iraq (1920). Despite the fact all the affected areas could sustain complex, programmatic political movements (as opposed to movements that might be characterized as temporary, defensive, and prepolitical), because all had been subjected to analogous processes—the uneven and asymmetric spread of dependent capitalism and the introduction of modern institutions of governance—a unique interplay of local, regional, and international determinants ignited and shaped each uprising.[41]

Although Woodrow Wilson had originally proposed an interallied commission merely to ascertain and convey the wishes of the Syrian population, the King-Crane Commission had the unintended effect of catalyzing and, in many ways, defining the political movement that arose to resist the imposition of a mandate on Syria. Gulled by the promise implicit in the commission's tour of Syria, the *mutanawwirun* constructed structures that expedited the mobilization of the population. Because these elites were oriented toward Europe and the peace conference, however, they designed institutions, demonstrations, and propaganda campaigns for the purpose of presenting to an outside audience an image of a sophisticated nation eager and prepared for independence. They thus deferred the task of integrating the majority of the population into their framework of legitimacy. As a result, during the period that preceded the French mandate, the *mutanawwirun* never truly involved nonelites in their nationalist project: they never dickered with the population over questions of ideology and program, they never synthesized a political discourse that was compelling to nonelites, and they never established connections with the population comparable to those that the Wafdist leadership had established with the population of Egypt, for example. In short, the announcement of the formation of the King-Crane Commission and its subsequent visit to Syria initiated an unintended chain of events that culminated in the strengthening of a populist nationalism dissociated from the guidance of the more Westernized nationalist elites.

Notes

1. *Editor and Publisher*, 2 December 1922, iii.

2. Notes by Sir Maurice Pascal Alers from the 20 March 1919 meeting of the Council of Four, in Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 56:116.

3. British prime minister David Lloyd George to French president Georges Clemenceau, 25 April 1919, in ibid., 58:134.

4. Unless otherwise indicated, the term "Syria" is meant to designate the territory of the Middle East that comprises present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and the Occupied Territories, and western Iraq.

5. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., *Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* vols. 5–6, *War and Peace: Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers (1917–1925)* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927), 5:180.

6. Ibid., 5:160–161.

7. J. C. Hurewitz, ed., *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record,* vol. 2, *British-French Supremacy, 1914–1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 112.

8. For the position of the Syrian nationalists in the Egyptian exile community, see James L. Gelvin, "Popular Mobilization and the Origins of Mass Politics in Syria, 1918–1920," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992, 209–211. See also Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, autobiographical manuscript stored in the Dar al-Watha'iq al-Tarikhiyya, Damascus.

9. Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 58:328.

10. Charles Seymour, ed., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House: The Ending of the War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 153, 199. The Balfour Declaration (named after British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour and issued on November 2, 1917) was in the form of a letter from Balfour to a leading British Zionist, Lord Walter Rothschild; it promised British support for the creation of "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. The declaration provided a much-needed boost to the Zionist movement by providing the legal framework for continued Jewish immigration and land purchases in Palestine, the twin pillars of the Zionists' policy to make Palestine their national home. The British issued the declaration for a number of reasons: to preempt what was expected to be a similar announcement by Germany; to win the support of worldwide Jewry, especially in the United States and USSR, which would aid the war effort; and to have a group beholden to British interests in Palestine in order to protect the right flank of the Suez Canal, act as a buffer between the anticipated French position in Syria and the British position in Egypt, and provide a land bridge from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf (from Palestine across Transjordan and Iraq to the Gulf).

11. Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 56:442, 58:322–326. Baker also wrote the following entry in his diary (21 May 1919; see ibid., 58:368) about the circumstances that led to the commission's departure: "[Wilson] told me with a kind of amused satisfaction—he gets very little fun out of his conferences, but he had it today—of the discussion this morning of the Syrian question and of a red-hot conflict of view between Lloyd George and Clemenceau. It seems that Lloyd George calmly proposed to give to Italy (to induce a settlement of the Fiume question) a slice of Syria which Clemenceau had already decided to gobble down. This perfectly frank scramble for territory, which in a moment of anger was fought with all guards down, seemed to amuse the President very much. It also had the effect of once more reviving the plan for the Syrian Commission (King and Crane). The President told the Four, positively, that our commissioners were leaving for Syria on Monday! It has given him his chance."

12. According to the report of the King-Crane Commission, "it is certain from the oral statements that accompanied the petitions that the term, 'Absolute independence,' was seldom used in the sense of an entire freedom from only foreign guidance such as that of a mandatory under the League of Nations, inasmuch as the request was frequently combined with a choice of mandate or a request for foreign 'assistance.' While a few of the Young Arab clubs certainly desired freedom from all foreign control, the great majority asked for independence and defined a mandate to mean only economic and technical assistance." "Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey (28 August 1919)," in US Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States,* vol. 12, *The Paris Peace Conference: 1919* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1947), 767.

13. Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* 58:133–134.

14. See Arthur S. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), 12.

15. Woodrow Wilson, "Political Sovereignty," in *Selected Literary and Political Papers and Addresses of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1927), 3:71.

16. See, for example, Woodrow Wilson, "The Character of Democracy in the United States," in ibid., 85–120.

17. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 204. In an interview with Ida M. Tarbell, Wilson quoted the following lines from "The Princess," by Alfred Lord Tennyson: "A nation yet, the rulers and the ruled— / Some sense of duty, something of a faith, / Some reverence for the laws ourselves have made, / Some patient force to change them when we will, / Some civic manhood firm against the crowd." *Collier's*, 28 October 1916, 37.

18. For the strategy of the King-Crane Commission, a complete listing of the groups it received, and its conclusions, see "Report of the American Section of the International Commission," cited in note 12 above.

19. Ibid., 863.

20. William Yale, "A Report on Syria, Palestine, and Mount Lebanon for the American Commissioners," Yale Papers, Boston University, Box X/Folder 8/22–23.

21. For details about the "middle strata" and its role in nationalist movements, see E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 90–94, 117–122; Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations,* trans. Ben Fowkes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), particularly 129–155. For a discussion of the changing nature of the urban notability during the nineteenth century, see Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

22. It is important to note that, contrary to the assumptions of William Yale and other Western observers, neither the Arab government nor any of the allied organizations were monolithic; moreover, the government and the political and cultural clubs included members who espoused a variety of ideologies and practices. For example, as late as the autumn of 1919, al-Fatat included three factions: the "dissenters" (*rafidun*) who refused to support any mandate; a "pro-British/anti-French" faction allied with Emir Faisal; and a faction that still held out hope for a US mandate. See ʻIzzat Darwaza, *Mudhakkirat wa tasjilat* (Damascus, 1984), 2:76–77, 81–82; Gelvin, "Popular Mobilization," 55–63, 74–85. In this essay, the term "Arab government" refers to the faction of the government that included Emir Faisal, his entourage, and his allies.

23. India Office, London: L/PS/10/802. Gertrude Bell, "Syria in October 1919," 15 November 1919, 11.

24. *al-'Asima,* 7 May 1919, 1–2.

25. See Khoury, *Urban Notables,* 86–88; Yusuf al-Hakim, *Dhikrayat,* vol. 3, *Suriya wa al-'ahd al-Faysali* (Beirut, 1966), 90–97; Safiuddin Joarder, *Syria Under the French Mandate: The Early Phase, 1920–1927* (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1977), 209–211.

26. Archives Diplomatiques, Nantes (hereinafter AD): 2430/no no. Cousse to Dame, 18 April 1919; Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris (hereinafter MAE): L:AH vol. 4/237–238; Picot to Pichon, 22 May 1919; MAE L:SL vol. 14/#897; Picot to MAE, 17 June 1919; MAE L:SL vol. 44/3D; Minault (Latakia) to Administrateur du Vilayet de Beyrouth, 18 July 1919; Ministère de la Defense, Vincennes (hereafter MD) 7N4182/Dossier 4/340; Picot to MAE 21 July 1919; MAE L:SL vol. 43/39–41. "Renseignements d'Agent," 10–20 July 1919; AD 2430 Dossier Confidential-Départ/#240, 11 August 1919. For texts of sermons distributed 11 and 18 April 1919, see AD 2343/286, Cousse to Haut Commissionaire, 24 April 1919.

27. MD L:SL vol. 12/32–38. Cousse to Haut Commissionaire, 6 April 1919; Gelvin, "Popular Mobilization," 321–322.

28. See Malcolm Russell, *The First Modern Arab State: Syria Under Faysal, 1918–1920* (Minneapolis: Biblioteca Islamica, 1985), 93–131.

29. See leaflet entitled "Independence or Death!" in MAE L:SL vol. 43/72–73, 21 July 1919 (in Arabic with French translation).

30. See Gelvin, "Popular Mobilization," 240.

31. Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, *Diwan Zirikli: al-a'mal al-shi'riyya al-kamila* (Amman[?], n.d.), 24–25 (translation by author).

32. See Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 51–53; George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1977).

33. For copies of leaflets signed "mankub," see: MAE L:SL vol. 43/62, 64. n.d.; MD 7N4182 /Dossier 4/340. Picot to MAE, 21 July 1920.

34. For a listing of the backgrounds of the primary and secondary leadership of the Higher National Committee of Damascus, see Gelvin, "Popular Mobilization," 125–130, 457–458.

35. Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, "The Job of Guidance," *al-'Asima,* 16 October 1919, 1–2.

36. Foreign Office, London: FO371/5188/E7808/#42. "Arabic Press Abstracts for Week Ending June 14, 1920," 26 May 1920.

37. *al-'Asima,* 23 October 1919, 1–2. It is interesting to contrast this statement with one made by Woodrow Wilson: "When I try to disentangle the ideas of the people and endeavor to express them if at first there is disaccord I am not astonished. I have firm confidence that their ideas will rally to mine." Quoted by Daniel Halevy, *President Wilson,* trans. Hugh Stokes (New York: John Lane Company, 1919), 244.

38. Yale, "A Report on Syria," 24.

39. Sudan Archives, University of Durham: SA/493/6/51. Amin M'aluf to Ahmad Shuqayr, 1 June 1920.

40. As'ad Daghir, *Mudhakirrati 'ala hamish al-qadiya al-'arabiyya* (Cairo, 1956), 122.

41. See Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly, *The Rebellious Century,* 50–54; E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959), 1–2, 110.

CHAPTER 3

US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD IRAN DURING THE MUSSADIQ ERA

Mark Gasiorowski

Muhammad Mussadiq, who served as Iran's prime minister from April 1951 until August 1953, is revered by almost all secular democratic Iranians and admired even by many supporters of the former monarchy and the current Islamic regime. He ended a long period of British hegemony in Iran by nationalizing the British-controlled oil industry, instilling a strong sense of national pride in most Iranians and setting the stage for several decades of rapid economic growth fueled by oil revenues. He also tried to democratize Iran's political system by reducing the powers of the king, or shah, and the traditional upper class and by mobilizing the urban middle and lower classes. Although he ultimately failed in this latter endeavor, his efforts made him a hero in the eyes of those Iranians who have dreamed of establishing a democratic regime in their country.

At the start of the Mussadiq era the United States had a very positive image in Iran, created by the small group of US teachers, missionaries, archaeologists, and administrators who had ventured there and by the commitment to freedom, democracy, and independence espoused by the US government and most Americans. The United States initially supported Mussadiq, upholding Iran's right to nationalize the oil industry, trying to mediate an agreement with the British, giving Iran limited economic aid, and generally praising Mussadiq and his democratic aspirations. However, US support for Mussadiq gradually declined. Under President Dwight D.

Eisenhower's administration the United States engineered a coup d'état that drove Mussadiq from office and ended the movement toward democracy he had been leading. The United States thereafter strongly backed Iran's shah, greatly facilitating his efforts to create an authoritarian regime in the decade after the coup. Consequently, the Mussadiq era also marked a period in which the popular image of the United States in Iran began to change from that of benevolent outsider to malevolent supporter of the shah's despotic regime.

This chapter examines US policy toward Iran during the Mussadiq era. It focuses particularly on the strategic considerations that led US officials to change from a policy of supporting Mussadiq to one of opposing and eventually overthrowing him, thus engendering the malevolent image many Iranians still have of the United States.

PROLOGUE: US POLICY TOWARD IRAN BEFORE THE MUSSADIQ ERA

Before World War II the United States had little strategic or economic interest in Iran, and relations between the two countries were cordial but distant. The United States established diplomatic relations with Iran in 1856 but did not send a diplomat of ambassadorial rank there until 1944. Contact between the two countries was very limited during the late 1800s and early 1900s, consisting mainly of the activities of a handful of US missionaries, teachers, and archaeologists who created a very positive image of the United States in Iran. Nevertheless, relations between the two countries were evidently of such little importance by the late 1930s that the shah recalled his ambassador to Washington for several years after derogatory comments about him appeared in the US press.[1]

With World War II raging in Europe, Britain and the Soviet Union jointly invaded Iran in September 1941 to establish a supply route to the Soviet army. The invading forces quickly overpowered the hapless Iranian army and forced the shah, who was seen as a German sympathizer, to abdicate in favor of his twenty-one-year-old son, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi. Following US entry into the war, the United States sent troops to Iran in conjunction with the supply operation, initiating a period in which US-Iranian relations grew rapidly. By early 1944 some thirty thousand US soldiers were stationed in Iran, guarding the supply route against bandits and German agents, expanding and improving Iran's transportation system and oil production facilities, and building plants to assemble aircraft, trucks, and oil drums. The United States sent military missions to Iran to reorganize and train the Iranian army and gendarmerie and gave Iran some $8.5 million in lend-lease aid during the war. Unlike Britain and the Soviet Union, the United States did not meddle in Iran's domestic affairs during the war, reinforcing its image as a champion of freedom and independence.[2]

As the German threat eased in 1944, the Soviet Union began to expand its influence and demand oil concessions in northwestern Iran, which it had occupied since 1941. Constrained by its need to maintain the wartime alliance, the United States initially made no effort to block these activities. However, as World War II drew to a close in 1945, the Soviet posture toward Iran grew more menacing and was paralleled by similar activities in Eastern Europe and Korea. As US officials grew increasingly concerned about Soviet expansionism, and after Harry S. Truman replaced the more diplomatic Franklin D. Roosevelt as president, the United States began to pressure the Soviet Union to withdraw its forces from Iran. Soviet officials demurred, and in December 1945 and January 1946 Soviet-backed rebels established the Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and the Kurdish People's Republic in northwestern Iran. Powerless to stop these actions, the Iranian government sought backing from the United States and Britain and petitioned the United Nations (UN) to demand a Soviet withdrawal. US officials issued protests to the Soviet government and strongly supported Iran's position at the UN. Backed by the United States, Iranian prime minister Ahmad Qavam traveled to Moscow in March 1946 and negotiated an agreement under which Soviet troops would withdraw from Iran. The Iranian army reoccupied Azerbaijan and Kurdistan in December 1946, crushing the autonomy movements and ending one of the first chapters in the Cold War.[3]

As the crisis in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan was drawing to a close, the US Department of State and other US government agencies conducted a thorough review of US interests in Iran. Reflecting the considerable effort US officials had made earlier to remove Soviet forces from northwestern Iran, US officials concluded that Iran was "of vital strategic interest" because Persian Gulf oil would be critical in the event of a war with the Soviet Union.[4] However, despite this finding, no major changes occurred in US policy toward Iran during the late 1940s. To contain Soviet expansionism, US policymakers at this time were pursuing a strategy of "strongpoint defense." This strategy called for a concentration of US defense efforts in Western Europe and Japan—on the western and eastern borders of the Soviet Union—and accorded a much lower priority to other regions, including the area south of the Soviet Union, where Iran lay. Consequently, though the shah and the various Iranian prime ministers of this era made repeated requests for US military and economic aid, Iran was not given a large aid package under the Truman Doctrine, and it received less US aid in the late 1940s than countries like Ireland, Portugal, and Sweden, despite its larger size and poorer economic conditions.[5]

The United States did slowly increase its involvement in Iran in other ways during this period, however. The military training missions begun during World War II were renegotiated and extended in 1947 and 1948. The US embassy staff grew considerably in size, enhancing diplomatic, commercial, and cultural interactions between the two countries. More important, the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), established a station in the Tehran embassy in early 1947 to take over covert operations then being conducted by US military attachés and embassy political officers. These covert operations included intelligence-gathering and propaganda operations aimed at the Soviet Union and its allies in Iran, cross-border espionage and subversion raids into Soviet territory, and efforts to map out escape and evasion routes and organize "stay-behind" guerrilla networks for use in the event of a Soviet invasion. Although these operations were all aimed ultimately at the Soviet Union, they did have the effect of strengthening or weakening various Iranian political actors in minor ways during this period.[6]

In the late 1940s unrest grew steadily among politically active Iranians, due mainly to the absence of meaningful opportunities for political participation and to growing resentment toward the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), a British-owned firm that was earning large profits from its monopoly over Iran's oil industry. Much of this unrest was mobilized and articulated by the Tudeh (Masses) Party, a pro-Soviet communist party established in 1941, which had become Iran's largest political party before falling into disfavor after the Azerbaijani crisis. In October 1949 a group of prominent political figures established an organization known as the National Front to press for political reforms and nationalization of the AIOC's assets in Iran. The National Front quickly became extremely popular and managed to elect eight of its members to the Majlis (the Iranian parliament) in late 1949. It was led by Muhammad Mussadiq, a charismatic Majlis deputy from a wealthy landowning family who had established a reputation as an ardent nationalist and democrat and one of Iran's few honest politicians.[7]

By early 1950 US officials had become alarmed about political conditions in Iran, with one describing Iran as "dangerous and explosive" and another warning that it might become a "second China."[8] Simultaneously, the National Security Council was undertaking a major reevaluation of US global strategy, codified in the April 1950 document known as NSC–68. The new strategy called for a "renewed initiative in the cold war" involving large increases in military and economic aid to countries located all along the Sino-Soviet periphery—not just those on the western and eastern borders of the Soviet Union.[9] The growing unrest in Iran and this new global strategy together led US officials to undertake a thorough review of US policy toward Iran, which concluded that a major effort had to be made to prevent the Tudeh Party from coming to power and delivering Iran into Soviet hands. As a result, during the following year US officials agreed to provide Iran with $23 million per year in military aid and a modest amount of economic aid; they approved a $25 million Export-Import Bank loan to Iran (which was never actually provided); and they supported Iran's request for a $10 million World Bank loan. They also sharply increased the number of US Foreign Service and CIA officers working in the Tehran embassy and named Henry Grady, a highly respected diplomat, to be the new US ambassador.[10] By early 1951 the United States had positioned itself to play a major role in Iranian politics.

THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE FIRST MUSSADIQ GOVERNMENT

Unrest continued to grow in Iran during 1950, with political reform and oil nationalization remaining the most contentious issues. Prime Minister Ali Razmara initiated a program of political and socioeconomic reforms but also attempted to implement an agreement with the AIOC negotiated under his predecessors that fell far short of popular demands. In response, Mussadiq and the National Front began to call for outright nationalization of the oil industry. In March 1951, a member of the Islamist group Fedayan-e Islam (Devotees of Islam) assassinated Razmara; his replacement, appointed by the shah, was Hussein Ala, a loyal ally. The country was swept by a new wave of unrest, leading the Majlis to nominate Mussadiq for the premiership and pass a bill nationalizing the oil industry. Bowing to popular sentiment, the shah appointed Mussadiq prime minister on April 29 and signed the oil nationalization bill into law on May 2.[11]

Nationalization of the AIOC posed a serious threat to Britain's weak economy and dwindling prestige, so the nationalization decree initiated a period of growing confrontation between Britain and Iran. In the following months British officials adopted a three-track strategy aimed at reestablishing Britain's control over Iran's oil industry by either pressuring Mussadiq into a favorable settlement or removing him from office. The first track was a half-hearted effort to negotiate a new oil agreement that would recognize the principle of nationalization but retain de facto British control over Iran's oil. This effort collapsed in August 1951, and the British thereafter refused to negotiate directly with Mussadiq. The second track consisted of a series of hostile measures aimed at undermining popular support for Mussadiq. The most important of these was a successful effort to persuade the major world oil companies to boycott Iranian oil exports. The British also imposed a series of bilateral economic sanctions on Iran and began an ominous military buildup in the region. The third element of the British strategy was a series of covert efforts to overthrow Mussadiq. These efforts continued throughout Mussadiq's tenure as prime minister and were carried out primarily through a network of politicians, businessmen, military officers, and clerical leaders that had been cultivated by British intelligence officers during their long years of intrigue in Iran.[12]

After Mussadiq assumed office, the Truman administration publicly expressed strong support for him, recognizing that he was popular and therefore could serve as an effective alternative to the Tudeh Party. Officials in Washington again undertook a review of US policy toward Iran, concluding that Iran must be kept in the Western camp at all costs because of its strategic location and that a protracted oil crisis might weaken the US economy and threaten US and Western security. Accordingly, for the remainder of Truman's term in office, the administration pursued a policy of supporting Mussadiq, opposing British efforts to overthrow him and attempting to mediate an agreement that would satisfy both parties to the oil dispute and minimize disruption of the world oil market.[13]

Soon after the oil nationalization law was enacted, US officials began to implement a plan to ease the effects of the British oil blockade on the world oil market. Under this plan US oil companies were asked to provide oil to US allies that had been adversely affected by the blockade. Some forty-six million barrels of oil were delivered under this plan in the first year of the blockade, amounting to roughly 20 percent of Iran's 1950 production. Although this effort was intended to help stabilize the world oil market, it also reinforced the oil blockade and therefore inadvertently helped to weaken the Iranian economy and undermine Mussadiq's popular support.[14]

At the same time, US officials began a concerted effort to facilitate a negotiated settlement of the oil dispute. They advised the British to accept nationalization of the AIOC and agree to a fifty-fifty division of profits with Iran—an arrangement that had become common throughout the industry by that time. In July 1951 Secretary of State Dean Acheson asked special envoy Averell Harriman to lead a mission to Tehran and London to mediate the dispute. Harriman worked assiduously to bring the British and Iranian positions closer together, inducing the British to send a negotiating team to Iran under the leadership of Sir Richard Stokes. The Stokes mission made little headway, and negotiations between Britain and Iran collapsed in August.[15]

Throughout this period the British had been working strenuously to replace Mussadiq with their close ally Sayyid Zia al-Din Tabatabai. This had involved direct pressures on the shah to dismiss Mussadiq and appoint Sayyid Zia as prime minister, as well as efforts to build support in the Majlis through the British intelligence network for Sayyid Zia's candidacy. British officials even went so far as to work out a set of guidelines for settling the oil dispute with Sayyid Zia. US officials were generally aware of these activities and neither supported nor opposed them. The British effort to install Sayyid Zia had not made much headway by the time the Stokes mission collapsed. Accordingly, in September 1951 British officials began to implement a plan to invade southwestern Iran and seize the oil fields. When US officials were told about this plan, President Truman notified British prime minister Clement Attlee that the United States would not support an invasion and urged him to resume negotiations. As a result, Attlee was forced to abandon the invasion plan, telling his cabinet that "in view of the attitude of the United States government, [he did not] think it would be expedient to use force" in Iran.[16]

Mussadiq traveled to New York in October to address the UN Security Council about the oil dispute. US officials invited him to Washington, hosting him warmly and making another concerted effort to mediate the dispute. These efforts again failed to bring about a settlement. During the following year US officials made a series of additional proposals that called for Iranian oil to be marketed by a consortium of US and other oil companies. When antitrust concerns led the major US oil companies to reject this plan, US officials first tried to persuade US independents to accept it and then, in the fall of 1952, decided to waive US antitrust laws to persuade the majors to participate. Despite these efforts, US officials were unable to settle the oil dispute.[17]

Having failed to reverse the nationalization law, install Sayyid Zia as prime minister, or seize the oil fields forcibly, the British began to search for other options in their efforts to regain control over Iran's oil. Another option soon materialized. Ahmad Qavam, who had been prime minister during the 1945–1946 Azerbaijani crisis, approached the British seeking support in his bid to replace Mussadiq as prime minister. British officials sent an emissary to meet with Qavam in Paris in March 1952. Qavam told the emissary that he would settle the oil dispute on terms acceptable to the British, and he produced a list of potential cabinet ministers for their approval. The British supported Qavam by accepting his plan to end the oil dispute and having their network of Iranian allies help him. Qavam spent the next several months trying to build support in Iran for his candidacy.[18]

Mussadiq suddenly resigned on July 16, in a dispute with the shah over the latter's powers. The shah then appointed Qavam prime minister. During the next several days the National Front organized a series of massive demonstrations calling for

Mussadiq's return to office. Army and police units attacked the demonstrators, killing at least 69 and injuring more than 750. Since Qavam had no popular backing, Mussadiq's supporters dominated the streets of Tehran. On July 21 the shah bowed to the popular will and appointed Mussadiq to a second term as prime minister, and Qavam slipped quietly into exile.[19]

THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE SECOND MUSSADIQ GOVERNMENT

The Qavam episode initiated a period of growing political instability in Iran. Morale in the armed forces dropped sharply. The Tudeh Party became more active. Mussadiq filled his new cabinet with close supporters and persuaded the Majlis to grant him emergency powers, angering National Front leaders such as Ayatollah Abul Qassem Kashani, Hussein Makki, and Muzaffar Baqai. More ominously, a group of military officers led by General Fazlollah Zahedi began to plot against Mussadiq with the Rashidian brothers, who were the central figures in the British intelligence network. Zahedi had briefly served as interior minister in Mussadiq's first government and had supported the National Front until the July 1952 uprisings, when the resurgence of Tudeh activity and plummeting morale in the armed forces apparently drove him to the opposition.[20]

Kashani, Makki, and Baqai soon approached Zahedi, expressing their dissatisfaction with Mussadiq and thereafter collaborating loosely with Zahedi in his plot. Zahedi also obtained the support of Abul Qassem Bakhtiari, a leader of the Bakhtiari tribe who had worked with him in collaboration with German agents during World War II. He then met with the British chargé d'affaires, asking for assurance that the British would not oppose him, would agree to a settlement of the oil dispute on terms similar to those worked out with Qavam, and would obtain US acquiescence in his activities. The chargé reported this to London and was told to help Zahedi. British intelligence officers then provided arms to the Bakhtiari. The chargé described Zahedi's activities to US ambassador Loy Henderson. Either Zahedi or a close lieutenant also met with Henderson in early September, telling him that a government would soon come to power that would halt the growth of Tudeh influence. Henderson reported these conversations back to Washington but remained noncommittal.[21]

US policy toward Iran during this period was ambiguous. Ambassador Henderson was alarmed about the resurgence of the Tudeh Party and the generally chaotic situation in Iran in the aftermath of the Qavam episode, and he recommended that Washington prop up the Mussadiq government with a large aid package. Although this did not occur, US officials renewed their efforts to resolve the oil dispute and continued to support Mussadiq, both publicly and in private conversations with the British. However, at some point, CIA officers in Tehran began to turn some of their anti-Soviet covert operations in directions that undermined Mussadiq's base of support. Under a propaganda operation code-named TPBEDAMN, they distributed newspaper articles and cartoons that depicted Mussadiq as corrupt and immoral and portrayed him as exploiting Kashani. They provided financial assistance to certain clergymen to drive them away from Mussadiq and to create a clerical alternative to

Kashani. CIA officers with long-standing ties to the Pan-Iranist Party and the Toilers' Party—both had strongly supported Mussadiq—made efforts to turn these organizations against Mussadiq. In a particularly noteworthy case, two CIA officers in the fall of 1952 approached Baqai, who had headed the Toilers' Party, giving him money and encouraging him to break with Mussadiq. Similar overtures may have been made to Kashani, Makki, and other prominent figures.[22]

By November 1952 both the Pan-Iranists and the Toilers' Party had split into pro- and anti-Mussadiq factions; Kashani, Makki, Baqai, and other National Front leaders had openly turned against Mussadiq, seriously weakening him. These three men, like most other Iranian politicians at the time, were opportunistic and may well have had other reasons for breaking with Mussadiq. Moreover, the British were carrying out very similar—and probably more extensive—covert activities against Mussadiq at this time. Therefore, although these CIA activities may well have helped to undermine Mussadiq's base of support, they were not the only forces operating against him in this period, and it is impossible to say with any certainty how much of a role they actually played in weakening him.

Mussadiq learned about Zahedi's plot and moved to stop him before it could be implemented. As a member of the Iranian senate, Zahedi enjoyed parliamentary immunity and therefore could not be arrested. However, Mussadiq issued arrest warrants on October 13 for the Rashidians and for General Abdul Hussein Hejazi, a close ally of Zahedi. Another general, Bahram Aryana, was dismissed from the army in connection with the plot. More importantly, on October 16 Mussadiq broke diplomatic relations with Britain, claiming British officials had supported Zahedi. This act alarmed US officials and persuaded some of them that the situation in Iran had gotten out of hand.[23]

No longer able to operate from the safety of their Tehran embassy, the British decided to seek US help in their efforts to oust Mussadiq. Christopher Montague Woodhouse, the head of British intelligence in Iran, was sent to Washington in November to meet with CIA and State Department officials and present them with a plan to oust Mussadiq. The plan called for a coordinated uprising to be engineered by the Rashidians and certain Bakhtiari tribal elements, with or without the shah's approval. Although the British believed Zahedi was well suited to lead the coup, they proposed several possible coup leaders. Most high-ranking CIA officials favored a coup by this time, although some lower-ranking Iran specialists and the CIA station chief in Tehran opposed the idea. State Department officials told Woodhouse that Truman would not support a coup but that President-Elect Eisenhower and his foreign policy team probably would.[24]

THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION AND MUSSADIQ

Dwight Eisenhower entered office in January 1953. His administration harbored bold plans to restructure US foreign policy in ways that would more effectively contain the Soviet Union. Its new global strategy, which was eventually set out in the October 1953 National Security Council study NSC–162, called for a broad effort to enhance containment while reducing US defense expenditures. An important element of this effort was a decision to strengthen pro-Western countries located along the Sino-Soviet periphery—a project that the Truman administration had begun but set aside as the Korean War and European reconstruction commanded its attention. These countries were to be strengthened with large military and economic aid programs, defense alliances, and, where necessary, covert political operations conducted by the CIA.[25] As a result, the Eisenhower administration redirected the US military and economic aid programs away from Europe toward the Third World; it constructed a ring of defense alliances around the Soviet Union and China; and it increased the CIA's use of covert operations. With its proximity to the Soviet Union and Mussadiq's failure to resolve the oil crisis, Iran was a crucial pawn in this new strategy and quickly became a major preoccupation for the Eisenhower administration.

Secretary of state designate John Foster Dulles and his brother, Allen Dulles, who was deputy director of the CIA under Truman and was to become CIA director under Eisenhower, had been following the situation in Iran with growing alarm. Although they did not regard Mussadiq as a Communist, they believed conditions in Iran would probably continue to deteriorate as long as he remained in office, strengthening the Tudeh Party and perhaps enabling it to seize power. In light of Iran's crucial role in the US strategy for containing the Soviet Union, they viewed this possibility with grave concern. The Dulles brothers therefore concluded that Mussadiq had to be removed from office—a conclusion that was not shared at this time by Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Henry Byroade, Ambassador Henderson, the CIA station chief in Tehran, or several lower-ranking State Department and CIA officials. Allen Dulles had met with Woodhouse in November 1952 and expressed his support for a coup to overthrow Mussadiq. The Dulles brothers were ready to begin preparations for a coup by the time Eisenhower was inaugurated.[26]

On February 3, 1953, two weeks after the inauguration, top US and British officials met in Washington to discuss the situation in Iran. At this meeting a decision was made to develop and carry out a plan to overthrow Mussadiq and install Zahedi as prime minister. Kermit Roosevelt, who headed the CIA's Middle East operations division, would lead this operation. Roosevelt traveled to Iran several times during the following months to prepare for the coup; he met with Zahedi, the Rashidians, members of the Tehran CIA station, and two Iranians code-named Nerren and Cilley, who were the main operatives in the TPBEDAMN propaganda operation. A US specialist on Iran working under contract for the CIA was assigned to develop a plan for the coup with a British intelligence officer. Roosevelt presented the coup plan to the Dulles brothers and other top US officials in a June 25 State Department meeting. He was directed to implement it immediately.[27]

Zahedi had continued to intrigue against Mussadiq after the exposure of his plot in October 1952. He remained in contact with Bakhtiari tribal leaders, who were given arms and money by the British during this period. His allies in the Majlis undertook a series of parliamentary maneuvers to try to oust Mussadiq. In February 1953, a group of retired military officers loyal to Zahedi and Bakhtiari tribesmen led by Abul Qassem attacked an army column, apparently trying to spark a coup.

Mussadiq responded by issuing an arrest warrant for Zahedi, who had lost his parliamentary immunity. Zahedi's allies then organized a series of violent disturbances in Tehran that nearly toppled the Mussadiq government. A similar incident occurred in late April, when several Zahedi associates kidnapped and murdered the commander of the national police, a staunch Mussadiq supporter. Rumors of coup plots circulated throughout the winter and spring of 1953.[28]

Following the June 25 State Department meeting, Roosevelt and his CIA team began to work in loose coordination with Zahedi. They used the TPBEDAMN network to launch an extensive propaganda barrage against Mussadiq and organize antigovernment and anti-Tudeh demonstrations, adding considerably to the turmoil that was engulfing Tehran. They sought the support of top military officers, arranging to have certain army units participate in the coup. In late July and early August they sent two emissaries to see the shah and obtain his support. When this proved unsuccessful, Roosevelt arranged through the Rashidians to meet personally with the shah. After direct US and British involvement were confirmed through special radio broadcasts, the shah agreed to support the plot.[29]

Having obtained the shah's backing, Roosevelt was ready to proceed with the coup. The shah signed decrees dismissing Mussadiq and appointing Zahedi prime minister. The commander of the shah's Imperial Guard delivered the first of these decrees to Mussadiq on the night of August 15 and was promptly arrested. Army and police units loyal to Mussadiq then set up roadblocks throughout the city, began a massive search for Zahedi, and arrested several of his associates. An armored column that had been assigned to move into Tehran in conjunction with Mussadiq's dismissal failed to arrive. As the coup plot unraveled the shah fled the country in panic, first to Baghdad and then to Rome. Zahedi was brought to a CIA safe house, where he remained for the next several days. Roosevelt made contingency plans to evacuate himself, Zahedi, and a few other participants.[30]

Despite these setbacks, Roosevelt and his colleagues began to improvise a new plan. They distributed copies of the decrees dismissing Mussadiq and appointing Zahedi throughout Tehran in order to publicize the shah's actions. They brought two US newspaper reporters to meet with Ardeshir Zahedi, who told them about the shah's decrees and characterized Mussadiq's rejection of them as a coup, since the decrees were in accord with the constitution. This information was quickly published in the *New York Times*. Ardeshir Zahedi and one of the CIA officers were sent to Kermanshah and Isfahan to persuade the garrison commanders in those cities to send troops to Tehran. The US military advisory group distributed military supplies to pro-Zahedi forces to encourage them to support the plot.[31]

On August 17 Nerren and Cilley used $50,000 given to them by Roosevelt's team to hire a large crowd that marched into central Tehran shouting Tudeh slogans, carrying signs denouncing the shah, tearing down statues of the shah and his father, and attacking Reza Shah's mausoleum. This crowd acted as agents provocateurs: it generated fear of a Tudeh takeover among Tehran residents and was even joined by many real Tudeh members, who assumed it had been organized by the party's leadership. These disturbances continued on the following day. Mussadiq therefore ordered the police to disperse the crowds, even though the Tudeh was tacitly supporting him against Zahedi and the shah. The Tudeh responded by ordering its members off the streets, removing an important obstacle to Mussadiq's opponents.[32]

By the evening of August 18 the police were closing in on the CIA safe house where Zahedi was hiding. Roosevelt therefore began to look for a new way to spark a coup. Knowing that Ayatollah Kashani was strongly opposed to Mussadiq and had considerable influence over lower- and middle-class Iranians, he decided to seek Kashani's help in organizing another crowd to agitate against Mussadiq. Following the Rashidians' advice, he had two CIA officers meet with Ahmad Aramesh, an influence peddler who apparently had connections with Kashani. They asked Aramesh to ask Kashani to organize an anti-Mussadiq crowd and gave him $10,000 to finance the effort. At the same time, the Rashidians and Nerren and Cilley probably made independent efforts to organize such a crowd.[33]

Although it is not clear whether Kashani or these figures were involved, a large crowd suddenly emerged near the Tehran bazaar in the late morning of August 19. The crowd attacked government office buildings and the offices of newspapers and political parties that supported Mussadiq. It was joined by army and police units and by onlookers who had become alarmed by the "Tudeh" demonstrations of the previous days. Realizing that events had turned decisively against him, Mussadiq refused to order his security forces to disperse the crowd. At the same time, an army unit seized the Tehran radio station and began to broadcast bulletins condemning Mussadiq and supporting Zahedi. An air force general led a column of tanks to the safe house where Zahedi was hiding and rescued him from the police units closing in around him. Military units and large groups of demonstrators then seized the army headquarters and marched on Mussadiq's home, where a nine-hour tank battle ensued. The walls around Mussadiq's house were destroyed and the house itself was stormed; some three hundred people were killed. Mussadiq escaped into a neighbor's yard but surrendered to Zahedi's forces the next day. Several days later the shah returned to Iran and personally thanked Roosevelt, telling him, "I owe my throne to God, my people, my army—and to you."[34]

The shah's comment to Roosevelt seems to have been appropriate, for the United States did indeed play a key role in overthrowing Mussadiq and ending the threat he had posed to Iran's autocratic monarchical system. Roosevelt and his colleagues had planned, financed, and led the coup, taking decisive actions after the attempt to arrest Mussadiq had failed and which later made the coup successful. Zahedi, its nominal leader, hid in a CIA safe house almost until the coup had been completed. The shah was not consulted about the decision to undertake the coup, the manner of its execution, or the candidate chosen to replace Mussadiq, and he had been reluctant to support the coup and had fled the country at the first sign of failure. The British had played a minor role in the coup, helping develop the initial plan for it—which failed—and directing the Rashidians to work with Roosevelt. Although the AIOC's oil boycott had weakened Iran's economy and thus helped undermine popular support for Mussadiq, many other outcomes could have resulted from Mussadiq's declining popularity. Although Zahedi and his allies might possibly have engineered a coup without US help, they had failed repeatedly to overthrow

Mussadiq during the previous year due to Zahedi's outstanding arrest warrants and lack of real popular support. No other Iranian appears to have had the popularity or military connections necessary to carry out a coup without external backing. Consequently, it seems safe to conclude that the United States played a decisive role in overthrowing Mussadiq and severely weakening the political movement he led.

A CONTEMPORARY DIPLOMAT'S VIEW

Sir Sam Falle

Editors' Note: *When possible, it is instructive to learn the perspectives of participant-observers in a critical event. Sir Sam Falle, who was present in Iran during the Mussadiq crisis, has provided the following account. It illustrates the difference between looking backward through the prism of subsequent events, as historians are compelled to do, and living forward without the benefit of hindsight, as diplomats and policymakers do.*

In the 1950s, I served Great Britain in Iran, Lebanon, and Iraq and at the Foreign Office in London on the Middle East oil desk. These postings gave me a worm's-eye view of a period of unprecedented change in the Middle East. There were revolutions in Iran, Iraq, and Egypt; I was present at the first two. The causes were intrinsically the same: resurgent nationalism against the British, who were, in any event, beginning to dismantle their empire and to dissociate themselves from their so-called stooges or puppets. In the midst of this change, the British and Americans shared the fundamental policy of denying the region to the Soviet Union while preserving oil supplies for the West, though sometimes they differed on the details. Both countries eventually came to agree on policy and methodology during the Muhammad Mussadiq crisis, a seminal event not only in Iran but also in the entire Middle East, especially in terms of the development of US foreign policy. In now turning to this episode, I take a different perspective from most who have commented on and written about the Mussadiq period.

Iran had just emerged from World War II, during which it had in practice been partitioned between Britain and the Soviet Union. The British oil company then known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (later Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, or AIOC, and then British Petroleum) continued to take the major share of the profits of Iran's oil for itself and the British government. Dr. Muhammad Mussadiq became prime minister in April 1951 with tremendous popular support. His appeal was simple and straightforward:

(*Continues*)

unequivocal nationalism, the nationalization of the oil industry, and the elimination of the AIOC's influence—indeed of all British influence—from Iran. His first act was oil nationalization, on May 2, 1951. This was a heady moment for Iran, and the rejoicing crowds cried, "Oil has been nationalized: Long live Dr. Muhammad Mussadiq, Iran's beloved prime minister!" And they really meant it, because, at last, they could walk tall, the imperialists had been defeated, and the streets of Tehran would soon be paved with the gold that the AIOC had been stealing from them.

When I came to Tehran at the beginning of 1952, support for Mussadiq was by no means monolithic. He had, of course, touched the nationalist chord, which was full of resentment against imperialism and the desire of a once-great nation to be respected again. But he had delivered nothing positive; he had destroyed but he had not built up, and he had cut off almost all of Iran's revenues. He had not known when to close a deal and had constantly asked for more. He must have understood that, although the US government was sympathetic to him personally and to his nationalist aspirations, there were limits to even its generosity. At the same time, he was well aware of US concern that Iran might turn to communism. So he decided to continue bargaining.

I next went to Washington, DC, as a member of a small delegation to discuss Iran. Many in Washington still thought that Mussadiq was the last, best hope; we disagreed, believing that his remaining in power would lead to a Communist takeover. What happened in 1953 is now well known: the overthrow of Mussadiq; the restoration of the shah, who had fled for a brief period; and the establishment of a pro-Western government in Tehran under General Fazlollah Zahedi.

It is a widely held view that it was a grave mistake to depose Mussadiq. But let us go back to 1952: we were very worried about the Soviet, Chinese, and world communist threats, with extremely good reason. Tensions were high and real. There was the Korean War and Stalin was still alive in all his psychopathic and dangerous malevolence. It was thought at the time that a Communist takeover of Iran would have been a disaster of appalling magnitude and might indeed have led to global conflict. It is questionable whether the United States could have tolerated the Soviet Union on the Gulf. It was impossible to predict in 1953 that the shah, who was in a relatively strong position at the time of his restoration, could have developed into such a disagreeable tyrant, nor could we have foreseen the irritant of Khomeini, who was impartial in his hatred of the superpowers. We saw the immediate danger, and I remain completely convinced that it was right and, indeed, vital, *given the circumstances of the time,* to topple Mussadiq.

(*Continues*)

A Contemporary Diplomat's View (*Continued*)

Many scholars have criticized US and British policy vis-à-vis Mussadiq, arguing that Mussadiq was a rare phenomenon in Iran in that he was both honest and a democrat. He represented resurgent Iranian nationalism and was both beloved and respected by the Iranian people. He was not a Communist—far from it—and he came from the landed ruling class, although he differed in his humanity and caring approach. Consequently, he was exactly the sort of leader whom the West should have supported, since he stood for nonviolent, progressive change. This was precisely what was needed to combat communism and lead Iran to true freedom and prosperity. The common belief is that the US government deposed Mussadiq for the wrong reasons, and that by supporting the increasingly tyrannical shah, it helped to bring about the Khomeini revolution, with all its unfortunate consequences for US-Iranian relations. The corollary to this argument is that an oil deal should have been made with Mussadiq, whatever the cost; or, even if this had proved impossible in the medium term, he should have been supported as our last, best hope in Iran and a bulwark against communism.

Clearly it would have been more desirable and in the interests of the United States, Iran, and, indeed, Britain if we could have made a reasonably satisfactory deal with Mussadiq. It might even, with the benefit of hindsight, have been better to make a poor deal than no deal at all. There were, however, limits beyond which it would have been impossible to go without upsetting the global oil business. Maybe it would have been worth it, and the cost to the United States might have been less than that of the Khomeini revolution. It is difficult to say, but, in my opinion, Mussadiq turned down some good offers that might have prevented the crisis.

To conclude on a personal note: In the British Foreign Service I was known as "Red Sam." This was because I believed in liberal causes, resurgent nationalism, and the like. Later I was a fervent supporter of both Egyptian president Gamal ʻAbd al-Nasser and the Iraqi nationalists. Thus, Dr. Mussadiq was initially a man after my own heart, and I am on record as a remorseless critic of the AIOC. The fact that even I eventually became convinced that he had to be replaced says something. Sadly, Mussadiq could not control the Communists, and they would have removed him from power and replaced him with one of their own. And, considering the political environment of the day, we thought this very well could have led to World War III.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has emphasized that US security interests—as conceived by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations—required that Iran be kept in the Western camp during the Cold War, implying that domestic political conditions in Iran could not be permitted to move beyond certain boundaries. Under the Truman administration these boundaries initially were drawn rather broadly: Mussadiq did not seem to pose a threat to US interests, and US policymakers believed he could serve as an effective counterbalance to the Tudeh Party. However, these perceptions slowly changed as Mussadiq remained in power and unrest grew in Iran. When Eisenhower entered office, the more stridently anti-Communist views of his foreign policy team and the changing perceptions of Mussadiq among some holdovers from the Truman administration together led the United States to drop its support for Mussadiq and take steps to overthrow him. Consequently, US security interests associated with the Cold War and changing views in Washington about how Mussadiq's regime affected these interests were responsible for the fateful US decision to undertake the August 1953 coup.

During the following decade these same considerations led US policymakers to provide extensive support to the shah, building up his autocratic regime as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism. Immediately after the coup they provided him with $68 million in emergency aid, roughly one-third of the total revenue Iran had lost as a result of the British oil embargo. Over $300 million in additional US economic aid was given to Iran during the next ten years. After the coup US officials renewed their efforts to settle the oil dispute, fostering an agreement that permitted Iran to begin exporting oil again in late 1954. Iran's oil income grew quickly as a result of this agreement, exceeding total US aid receipts by 1958 and thereafter serving as the shah's main source of revenue. The United States also began a major effort to strengthen the shah's security forces soon after the coup, reorganizing and training his domestic intelligence apparatus and giving him almost $600 million in military assistance during the next decade.[35]

With the threat from Mussadiq and the National Front effectively contained, the economy growing rapidly, and an increasingly effective security apparatus in place, the shah consolidated his grip on power in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By late 1963 this process had been completed: the shah presided over an authoritarian regime under which organized opposition was not tolerated, and there seemed little chance that he would fall from power. However, many politicians were aware that Iranians deeply resented the shah's regime and increasingly blamed the United States for restoring him to power in 1953 and then helping him to consolidate the new regime. This resentment generated a new challenge to the shah in the 1970s that differs from the one posed by Mussadiq: nondemocratic, violent, and deeply anti-American. This new challenge brought the shah's regime crashing down in the late 1970s and created a series of major crises for the United States.

Thus, the strategic considerations that led US policymakers to undertake the 1953 coup and then build up the shah's regime helped set in motion a chain of events that later destroyed his regime and created severe problems for US interests.

Notes

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CHAPTER 4

NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS IN US POLICY TOWARD EGYPT, 1949–1956

Peter Hahn

From the late 1940s through the Suez crisis of 1956, US officials faced a bewildering variety of security problems with regard to Egypt. In the late 1940s, a bitter dispute raged between Great Britain, a Cold War partner that wished to remain in possession of its military base facilities in the Suez Canal Zone, and Egypt, a nationalistic state that sought to escape British military occupation. Each side sought US endorsement of its position in this dispute, which remained unsolved into the early 1950s. After the Egyptian revolution of 1952, President Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser negotiated the departure of British forces from his country and challenged the remnants of Western imperialism elsewhere in the region. US officials found it impossible to reconcile Nasser's nationalism to their security interests in the Middle East and therefore sought to undermine his prestige and influence in the region. When Britain decided to wage war on Egypt in late 1956, however, US officials took steps to halt the attack on the grounds of US national security. From the late 1940s to 1956, Washington consistently made policy toward Egypt on the basis of its security interests.

EGYPT'S EMERGENCE AS A REGION OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

During the decades preceding World War II, Egypt emerged as a region of strategic importance to the British Empire. Britain militarily occupied Egypt in 1882 in order to protect the Suez Canal and lines of communication to India, and it gained enormous advantages during World War I by closing the canal to the Central Powers and by staging troops in Egypt for the Gallipoli and Jerusalem campaigns. Having legally secured the right to occupy Egypt through the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty, the British used the Suez Canal Zone during World War II to deny Axis forces in North Africa easy access to oil fields in the Middle East, to ensure vital communications and transit between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, and to develop a major base that boasted airfields, supply dumps, repair shops, and personnel facilities. At war's end, nearly two hundred thousand British troops were stationed in the Canal Zone base.[1]

US officials who examined the security situation in the Middle East during the early years of the Cold War recognized the immense potential strategic importance of Egypt. As international tensions escalated during 1945 and 1946, defense officials identified the British base in the Suez Canal Zone as a facility of vital importance. In the event of war against the Soviet Union, they reasoned, Western access to the base would prove essential to victory. To promote national security, in other words, US officials would support London's quest to maintain its base in Egypt.

The US-Soviet confrontation over Turkey in 1946 first attracted the attention of Pentagon officials to Egypt. "Any action which threatens Britain's control of the Suez Canal and deprives her of a sizable portion of the Middle East oil fields," the Joint War Plans Committee (JWPC) observed, "threatens her position as a world power." Soviet conquest of the Suez Canal "would have serious adverse effects upon British capabilities in a major war."[2]

Contingency war plans devised in the Pentagon in 1946 also stressed the importance of maintaining access to British air bases in Egypt. In the event of hostilities, according to a war plan code-named PINCHER, US bombers would attack the Soviet Union's oil industry in order to cripple its war-making capability. Bombers would need air bases in Egypt in order to reach a sufficient number of vulnerable targets in the southern Soviet Union. Bombers dispatched from England, Pakistan, or Japan would lack the range to strike such targets. From airfields in the Suez Canal Zone, Western bombers could reach Moscow, the nerve center of Soviet power, and a host of other valuable targets. "Early availability of secure V[ery] H[eavy] B[omber] operating bases in the Cairo area," the war plan MAKEFAST added in late 1946, "is essential to the attainment of the strategic air offensive objectives."[3]

Military bases in Egypt also possessed other attractive features. Pentagon planners were confident that bases in the Canal Zone could be defended against the southward Soviet thrust anticipated in the opening stages of war. Egypt's proximity to the Soviet Union qualified it as a staging area for offensive operations into south-central Russia. The Suez Canal corridor enabled provision of the country from the Indian Ocean should the enemy close the Mediterranean. Egypt would likely emerge as a base for psychological warfare measures targeted especially at secessionists in southern Russia. As the JWPC stressed, the importance of possessing bases in Egypt "can hardly be over-emphasized."[4]

Pentagon planners confirmed the importance of British bases in Egypt as the Cold War escalated in 1948 and 1949. In June 1948, during the Berlin crisis, the Joint

Strategic Planning Group (JSPG) observed that facilities in Egypt needed to defeat the Soviet Union in war "far exceed[ed] those envisaged" in earlier plans. In July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) stressed that Egypt remained essential "as a base from which to initiate an air offensive against vital elements of the Soviet warmaking capacity." In December, army officers recognized Egypt's "important role" in any military engagement in the Middle East. In March 1949, US secretary of defense James Forrestal confirmed Egypt's abiding importance to US national security. "In the event of global war," the National Security Council (NSC) resolved in late 1949, after the Chinese Communist revolution and the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb, "the United States would probably wish to use facilities in the Cairo-Suez area in conjunction with the British." Indeed, army planners presumed, "should emergency dictate, the U.S. will avail itself of any facilities held by the British."[5]

From 1950 to 1953, the strategic value of British facilities in Egypt diminished slightly but remained significant. The development of long-range aircraft reduced the importance of Egypt as a launching point for any strategic air offensive against Soviet targets, but the country remained vital as a poststrike landing-and-refueling point for heavy bombers launched from Britain and as a defensive barrier, supply depot, and staging area. Renovations at Abu Sueir, Canal Zone (started in 1949 and completed in 1952), made it the only air base in the Middle East capable of handling heavy bombers. US military officials secretly stockpiled supplies at Abu Sueir and Cairo International Airport. In the eyes of US strategists, national security dictated that British military facilities in Egypt remain accessible to Western powers in the event of war.[6]

THE US DILEMMA: BALANCING EGYPT'S AND BRITAIN'S INTERESTS

US interest in maintaining British military facilities in Egypt for national security reasons conflicted with US interest in mollifying Egyptian nationalism for political reasons. In the late 1940s, Egyptian nationalists began to challenge Britain's presence in their country. Specifically, they demanded revision or abrogation of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty that authorized the British base in the Canal Zone. Extensive Anglo-Egyptian negotiations in the late 1940s failed to reach a settlement, and nationalists turned to other tactics, including work stoppages, boycotts, and terrorist attacks, to compel the British to leave. Until the early 1950s, Britain resisted the Egyptian demands, and a deadlock ensued.[7]

The Anglo-Egyptian conflict confronted the United States with a thorny dilemma. Some officials of the US Department of State wanted to recognize Egyptian national aspirations in order to ensure the loyalty of the Egyptian people and other Third World nations in the Cold War as well as to honor the US ideal of self-determination. To Pentagon officials, however, a British departure from Egypt, in the absence of satisfactory promises by Egypt to allow access to its bases, would imperil national security.[8]

US officials considered access to military bases in Egypt so vital that they repeatedly subsumed their conflicting political interests in Egypt. In May 1946, for example, US officials interceded on London's behalf in Anglo-Egyptian negotiations that had stalemated over the question of Britain's right to return to bases in Egypt after it departed the country. US secretary of state James Byrnes told King Farouk that he hoped Egypt would avoid "running the risk of undermining the security of the Middle East" in its quest for "full sovereignty." Egypt's hostile reaction to that message made US officials reluctant to intercede again, but they quietly encouraged the British to remain firm in negotiations with Cairo.[9]

In preparation for the Anglo-American "Pentagon talks" of October 1947, US Department of Defense officials insisted that the United States endorse Britain's position in Egypt for reasons of national security. Despite their fears that angering Egyptian nationalists might undermine the very Western interests that the Pentagon wished to preserve, officials at Foggy Bottom agreed. At the talks, State Department officials suggested that Britain appease Egyptian nationalism by agreeing in principle to withdraw eventually from Egypt, but they relented easily when British officials protested that this step would signal weakness. US and British officials agreed that "the British should have the right to maintain [in Egypt] . . . certain strategic facilities . . . during peacetime in such a condition that they could be effectively and speedily used in case of an immediate threat to the security of the Middle East." It would be "dangerous in the present world situation for the British Government to abandon such strategic facilities to which it is entitled by treaty in Egypt." In these Anglo-American talks—conducted as the Cold War was intensifying—US officials sacrificed their interest in appeasing nationalism to national security considerations.[10]

US officials showed slightly more concern for Egyptian nationalism in 1949. Because Egypt blamed the United States for the creation of Israel, the war in Palestine had embittered Cairo against Washington. To avoid further alienation, US officials refused a British request that the US participate in talks between British and Egyptian military officers about the future of the British bases in the Canal Zone. By early 1950, however, State Department officials again interceded in Anglo-Egyptian negotiations to urge the government of Egyptian prime minister Mustapha Nahas to recognize that Western defense rights in Egypt were consonant with Egyptian sovereignty. "If Egypt insists that Britain withdraw her troops from the Suez zone," Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee told the Egyptian ambassador, "it would result in a weakening of Egypt's military strength at precisely a time when Egypt desires to increase her powers of resistance." In July, following the eruption of the Korean War, McGhee refused an Egyptian appeal for support in negotiations with London, instead warning that "Russian aggression in the Near Eastern area" loomed possible, in which case "it would be essential to our common strategic plans to have the British on the spot."[11]

FROM A COMPROMISE SOLUTION TO EGYPT'S DIMINISHING IMPORTANCE

In late 1950 and early 1951, however, US officials came to fear that unmollified Egyptian nationalism might abet the rise of neutralism in that state and throughout the

Middle East. "The Near Eastern nations are at a point of decision," Samuel K. C. Kopper, deputy director of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, noted in December 1950, "as to whether to cast their lot irrevocably with the West, to remain neutral, or to drift into the Soviet orbit." Pressuring Egyptian leaders to align with the West, McGhee concluded in early 1951, was bound to fail. A compromise solution to the base dispute, McGhee realized, "would outweigh the present advantages of the British position."[12]

In 1951, therefore, US officials devised the Middle East Command (MEC) concept to bridge the gap between strategic and political interests in Egypt. The MEC idea envisioned a multilateral, anti-Soviet defense arrangement that would include Egyptian military officers with headquarters in Cairo. Unfortunately, the chance that Egypt would approve MEC diminished in the summer of 1951, when the United Nations (UN) Security Council, at the behest of Britain and France, passed a resolution censuring Egyptian restrictions on canal shipping destined for Israel. Before Western powers found the time to propose MEC to the government in Cairo, Prime Minister Nahas had commenced parliamentary procedures to nullify the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty. Egypt summarily rejected MEC.[13]

State Department officials were deeply troubled by Egypt's rejection of MEC, by its abrogation of the treaty, and by a wave of violence between British troops and Egyptian guerrillas in late 1951 and early 1952. The turmoil helped trigger the revolution of July 1952, in which a clique of military officers led by Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser ousted King Farouk. Alarmed by the parallel rise of revolutionary nationalism in Egypt and Iran, Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson feared that the entire Middle East might turn hostile to the West unless Britain made concessions to end its impasse with Egypt. Pentagon officials, on the other hand, favored fully endorsing Britain's stubborn position. The NSC reconciled these positions by resolving in April 1952 "to induce the U.K. to modify its position in ways which, while maintaining basic Western interests, might make possible an early negotiated settlement." But Britain would not be induced to make any concessions, and the Anglo-Egyptian impasse persisted into 1953. In light of national security requirements, US officials refrained from strongly pressuring the British to make those concessions that might have served the US political interest of mollifying Egyptian nationalism.[14]

In 1952 and 1953, changing circumstances in the Middle East and elsewhere rendered the Canal Zone military base less essential to US and British security. British officials concluded in late 1952 that Soviet development of atomic weapons made it dangerous to concentrate eighty thousand soldiers in a single base site within Soviet bomber range. Attacks by Egyptian guerrilla fighters, moreover, inflicted severe human, psychological, and financial costs. The Canal Zone base, though still important, seemed to the British no longer indispensable. They decided to move their headquarters to Cyprus, relocate troops to the home isles, and rely on rapid air transit in the event of an emergency.[15]

Similar ideas developed on the western shore of the Atlantic. When Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, the Pentagon began thinking about shifting its Middle East security focus from Egypt to the northern tier of the region. After Pakistan joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in

1954, a northern tier pact offered to complete a chain of anti-Soviet pacts from East Asia to northern Europe. The governments of the northern tier seemed more ready than Arab states such as Egypt to cooperate with Western defense plans. More secure than the lone, gigantic base at Suez, a series of smaller facilities scattered along the Soviet perimeter also provided advantages in intelligence collection and offensive capabilities. For example, Thor and Jupiter missiles, developed in the mid-1950s, could carry nuclear payloads but for only short distances.[16]

In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles approved a shift in US strategic focus from Egypt to the northern tier. Conversations during a tour of the Middle East in the spring of 1953 convinced Dulles that Egypt, beset by rampant forces of nationalism, would not serve as a reliable security partner but that northern tier states would. Turkey and Pakistan, he observed, would serve as cornerstones of a defense pact of states that "are most conscious of the Soviet threat and most disposed to cooperate with western powers." Dulles declared the original MEC idea to be "on the shelf." In 1954, US Air Force officials canceled planned improvements at the Abu Sueir airfield. The northern tier idea came to fruition with the signing of a Turkish-Iraqi pact in Baghdad on February 24, 1955. Britain joined the Baghdad Pact in April 1955; Pakistan joined in September and Iran in October.[17]

In light of Egypt's diminished strategic importance, US officials pressed the British to make concessions needed to break their deadlock with Egypt. With strong US urging, a reluctant Churchill government approved a base treaty in July 1954 (signed in October 1954). The accord terminated the 1936 treaty, provided for withdrawal of British forces over twenty months, permitted British civilian technicians to maintain the base, and authorized the British military to return in the event of a Soviet attack on Turkey or any Arab state. British forces completed their departure in June 1956.[18]

US officials hoped that Nasser, with his independence secured, would cooperate with Western security plans, endorse the northern tier pact, and eventually join it. "We are counting on Egypt," Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John D. Jernegan noted on August 16, 1954, "to play an important leadership role . . . in the achievement of United States policy objectives in the Middle East." Nasser talked about forming an Arab League collective security pact, and Dulles suggested linking this pact to the northern tier arrangement via an Egyptian-Turkish mutual defense treaty. Nasser's initial reaction and his acceptance of $40 million in US economic aid in late 1954 encouraged US hopes that Nasser would become a security partner.[19]

By early 1955, however, such US optimism seemed unfounded. Nasser refused to accept US military aid because of the standard condition that a US military mission would administer it, a condition that to him smacked of colonialism. He also rejected a secret US plan, which would have violated congressional rules for administering aid, to divert $5 million of the $40 million in economic aid to military hardware purchases.[20]

As negotiations on military aid stalemated, Nasser emerged as a thorn in America's side in the Middle East. He reversed himself on the northern tier idea and became a chief critic of the Baghdad Pact. He claimed as Egypt's mission the riddance of Western imperialism from the Middle East. He reacted strongly to Israeli provocations and responded coolly to the Anglo-American "Alpha" peace plan. In the absence of US military aid grants, Nasser purchased a massive quantity of arms from the Soviet Union in September 1955.[21]

Eisenhower and Dulles at first tried to appeal to Nasser by offering to finance construction of the Aswan Dam, and they tried to pacify the Egyptian-Israeli situation by sending special emissary Robert Anderson to broker a deal in early 1956. But Nasser would neither accept the conditions of the dam aid offer nor cooperate fully with the Anderson mission. Worse, in early 1956, he encouraged anti-British rioters in Jordan and Bahrain, continued to criticize the Baghdad Pact, bought weapons from Poland, and recognized the People's Republic of China. NSC officials concluded that Nasser's "positive neutralism actually works in favor of the Soviet bloc since it is directed against established western positions."[22]

US officials had concluded by March 1956 that, despite their efforts to woo Nasser, he had emerged as a threat to their national security interests in the Middle East. With the British, therefore, they concocted the Omega policy, a series of steps designed to undercut Nasser's prestige among Arab peoples and possibly to remove him from power. Omega would "let Colonel Nasser realize," Dulles noted, "that he cannot cooperate as he is doing with the Soviet Union and at the same time enjoy most-favored-nation treatment from the United States." Omega planned for the gradual withdrawal of the Aswan aid offer, but in July, under strong congressional pressure, Dulles canceled the deal abruptly. Nasser retaliated against the Aswan renege by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company and announcing that its revenues would finance the dam.[23]

THE 1956 SUEZ CRISIS

Nasser's seizure of the canal company provoked the Suez crisis of late 1956. The British at once resolved to use force to recover control of the waterway and knock Nasser from power, and they eventually conspired with the French and the Israelis to launch a tripartite attack against Egypt that began October 29. President Eisenhower, by contrast, decided early in the crisis that force would threaten US national security interests. A British attack on Egypt would foment Anglophobia around the world, inflame Arab nationalism (and thus imperil oil supplies to the West), and result in a long and costly British occupation of the Suez Canal Zone. For the United States to allow London to wage war on Egypt, Eisenhower told the NSC on July 31, "might well array the world from Dakar to the Philippine Islands against us." A breach with London would "be extremely serious, but not as serious as letting a war start and not trying to stop it."[24]

Accordingly, Eisenhower sought to use diplomacy to delay a British attack, on the calculation that time would cool British tempers and avert war. In late July he dispatched Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Murphy and Dulles to London to soothe British anger. In August, Eisenhower and Dulles arranged the London Conference to devise a diplomatic solution to the question of control of the canal, in September they proposed establishment of a Suez Canal Users Association to govern the waterway, and in October they encouraged Britain and

Egypt to resolve their differences through negotiations sponsored by the United Nations. Eisenhower also publicly and privately appealed to British prime minister Anthony Eden to practice restraint. “The use of force,” he cabled Eden on September 3, “would . . . vastly increase the area of jeopardy.” The developing world “would be consolidated against the West to a degree which, I fear, could not be overcome in a generation and, perhaps, not even in a century.”[25]

Once hostilities began on October 29, Eisenhower moved to end the fighting promptly for three national security reasons. First, he regretted that the attack on Egypt diverted global attention from Moscow’s brutal crushing of the rebellion in Hungary. Second, he feared that the Soviets would politically support Egypt and thereby win favor among developing nations. Unless the United States ended the fighting, Dulles observed, “all of these newly independent countries will turn from us to the USSR. We will be looked upon as forever tied to British and French colonialist policies.” “How can we possibly support Britain and France,” Eisenhower added, “if in so doing we lose the entire Arab world.” US inaction would enable the Soviet Union to seize “a mantle of world leadership through a false but convincing exhibition of concern for smaller nations.”[26]

Third, Eisenhower gravely worried about Soviet threats to intervene militarily to defend Egypt. On November 5, one day after crushing the rebellion in Budapest, Moscow threatened to send troops to Egypt and to fire rockets on London and Paris. The JCS interpreted this statement as “serious intent on the part of the Soviets.” Eisenhower observed that Soviet leaders were “scared and furious” over Hungary, “and there is nothing more dangerous than a dictatorship in this frame of mind.” The president warned Moscow that the United States would defend its allies, but he also tightened his diplomatic and financial squeezes to convince Britain and France to halt the fighting. Both powers accepted a UN cease-fire on November 6.[27]

CONCLUSION

From the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, US officials consistently made policy toward Egypt on grounds of national security. From 1946 to 1953, the overriding strategic importance of British military facilities in Egypt compelled them to actively and passively endorse Britain’s determination to remain in the Suez Canal Zone over Egypt’s strong opposition. Such security concerns, in light of the Cold War and the Korean War, convinced officials in Washington to subsume their conflicting political interest in befriending Egyptian nationalism. Only when the move to the northern tier diminished the strategic importance of Egypt did US officials find it safe to pressure Britain to reach a settlement providing for withdrawal of British forces from the Suez Canal Zone.

After the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian treaty, US officials hoped to win Nasser’s cooperation with their plans for securing the Middle East against Soviet expansion. But Nasser refused US overtures and emerged as a leading critic of Western influence in the region. Therefore, again for reasons of national security, US officials together with the British initiated the Omega policy to undermine Nasser’s prestige in the Middle East and, perhaps, even his power in Cairo.

National security concerns also determined US behavior during the Suez crisis of late 1956. Fear that the Soviet Union would gain politically or intervene militarily compelled Eisenhower to oppose British plans for war against Nasser and then to use his power to halt the attack once it began. Contrary to its political concerns, the United States censured its British ally and rescued Nasser from aggression during the Suez conflict. Such actions were entirely consistent with Washington's national security imperatives, which prevailed, as before, over its competing political interests.

Notes

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2. JWPC 450/3, 10 March 1946, Record Group (RG) 218, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CCS 092 USSR (3-27-45), section 6 (hereinafter RG 218 with appropriate filing designations), National Archives, Washington, DC (hereinafter National Archives).

3. "PINCHER," JPS 789, 2 March 1946, US Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Soviet Union (Washington, DC: University Publications Microfilm, 1978), reel 1; and "Air Plan for MAKEFAST," n.d. [autumn 1946], RG 165, Records of the Army Staff, ABC 381 USSR (2 March 1946), section 3, National Archives.

4. JWPC 450/3, 10 March 1946, RG 218, CCS 092 USSR (3-27-45), section 7. See also JIS 226/3, 4 March 1946, RG 218, CCS 092 USSR (3-27-45), section 5.

5. JSPC 684/40, 2 June 1948, RG 319, Records of the Army Staff, P&O 686 TS, case 1, National Archives (hereinafter RG 319 with appropriate filing designations); JCS 1887/1, 28 July 1948, RG 218, CCS 381 EMMEA (11-19-47); unsigned report on Egyptian airfields, 1 December 1948, RG 319, P&O 686, case 273; NSC 47/2, 17 October 1949, Harry S. Truman Papers, President's Secretary's Files, Subject File: NSC Series, Box 193, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri (hereinafter Truman Library); and memorandum by Maddocks, 4 February 1949, RG 319, P&O 686 TS, case 9. See also NSC 45, 17 March 1949, RG 273, Records of the National Security Council, National Archives (hereinafter RG 273 with appropriate filing designations).

6. NSC 68, 14 April 1950, US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1959–1990), 1: 261–262 (hereinafter FRUS with volume and page citations); Walter S. Poole, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, vol. 4, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1950–1952* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1980), 161–172; Bradley to Lovett, 25 June 1952, RG 330, Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, CD 092 (Egypt) 1952, National Archives (hereinafter RG 330 with appropriate filing designations); NSC 129/1, 24 April 1952, RG 273; and JSPC 684/130, 1 November 1952, US Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Middle East (Washington, DC: University Publications Microfilm, 1978), reel 1.

7. Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945–1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 94–109, 132–139.

8. See, for example, Memorandum of Conversation by Battle, 27 January 1952, RG 59, General Records of the US Department of State, 774.00, National Archives (hereafter RG 59 with appropriate filing designations); report by Hendershot, 4 April 1952, RG 59, 611.80; Summary of Discussion, 23 April 1952, and NSC 129/1, 24 April 1952, RG 273; and Bradley to Lovett, 25 June 1952, RG 330, CD 092 (Egypt) 1952.

9. Byrnes to Tuck, 24 May 1946, RG 59, 741.83. See also Tuck to Byrnes, 27 May and 11 June 1946, and Clark to Byrnes, 27 June 1946, ibid.

10. US-UK Agreed Minute, n.d. [16 October 1947], Foreign Office (hereinafter FO) 800/476, Records of the Foreign Secretary's Office, ME/47/17, Public Record Office (hereinafter PRO), Kew Gardens, London. See also Memorandum of Conversation by Hare, 9 October 1947, FRUS 5 (1947): 561–562; State Department Policy Memoranda, n.d. [c. early October 1947], ibid., 521–522, 543–544; and Royall to Marshall, 29 September 1947, and Unsigned Memorandum for the Record, 23 September 1947, RG 319, P&O 091.7 (section 2), case 50.

11. Memorandum of Conversation by Acheson, 13 April 1950, Dean G. Acheson Papers, US Secretary of State Series, Box 64, Truman Library; and Memorandum of Conversation by Stabler, 17 July 1950, RG 59, 641.74. See also Acheson to Holmes, 17 February 1949, FRUS 6 (1949): 194–195.

12. Paper by Kopper, 27 December 1950, FRUS 5 (1950): 11–14; and Minutes of Meeting, 2 May 1951, FRUS 5 (1951): 113–120.

13. Peter L. Hahn, "Containment and Egyptian Nationalism: The Unsuccessful Effort to Establish the Middle East Command, 1950–1953," *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 23–40.

14. NSC 129/1, 24 April 1952, RG 273.

15. Memorandum by Eden, 27 October 1952, Records of the Cabinet Office, CAB 129/56, C(52)369, PRO; Minutes of Meeting, 29 October 1952, Cabinet Meetings Minutes, CAB 128/25, CC 91(52)7, PRO; and Minutes of Meeting, 11 December 1952, Records of the British Defence Committee, CAB 131/12, D(52)12/4, PRO.

16. JCS to Lovett, 17 October 1952, RG 330, CD 092 (Middle East 1952); NSC 155/1, 14 July 1953, NSC 5428, 23 July 1954, and progress report on NSC 5428, 7 April 1955, RG 273; and unsigned Memorandum by State Department, 17 May 1954, RG 59, 611.41.

17. Circular Telegram by Dulles, 30 July 1953, RG 59, 780.5. See also Washbourne to Division of Operations, 28 September 1954, and Memorandum for the Record by Logan, 8 December 1954, RG 341, Records of the Headquarters of the US Air Force, National Archives.

18. Evelyn Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez: Diaries, 1951–1956* (New York: Norton, 1987), 233; and Murray to Eden, 3 November 1954, PREM 11/702, Records of the Prime Minister's Office, PRO (hereinafter PREM with appropriate filing designations).

19. Jernegan to Murphy, 16 August 1954, RG 59, 774.13. See also Hart to Byroade, 26 October 1954, and Caffery to Dulles, 6 November 1954, RG 59, 774.5MSP.

20. Caffery to Dulles, 16 September and 27 November 1954, RG 59, 774.5MSP; Memorandum by Operations Coordinating Board (hereinafter OCB) working group, 21 December 1954, OCB.091, Egypt folder, OCB Central File Series, NSC Staff Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas (hereinafter Eisenhower Library); and Stevenson to Eden, 17 January 1955, Political Correspondence of the Foreign Office, FO 371/113608, JE1057/1, PRO.

21. Byroade to Dulles, 20 May and 9 June 1955, FRUS 14 (1955–1957): 192, 234; Powers to Radford, 18 August 1955, RG 218, CJCS (Radford) 091 Egypt; State Department Report, 12 September 1955, IR 7042, Records of the Research and Analysis Branch, RG 59; and progress report on NSC 5428, 2 November 1955, RG 273.

22. Progress Report on NSC 5428, 17 May 1956, RG 273. See also Progress Report on NSC 5428, 2 November 1955, RG 273; Dulles to Macmillan, 5 December 1955, FRUS 14 (1955): 820–821; Memorandum of Conversation, [30 January 1956], Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers (Ann Whitman File): International Series, Box 20, Eisenhower Library (hereinafter Whitman File with appropriate filing designations); Hoover to Dulles, 16 March 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 4, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

(hereinafter Dulles Papers with appropriate filing designations); and Eisenhower diary entry, 8 March 1956, Whitman File: Diary Series, Box 9.

23. Dulles to Eisenhower, 28 March 1956, Whitman File: Diary Series, Box 13. See also Memorandum of Conversation, 19 July 1956, and Byroade to Dulles, 26 July 1956, FRUS 15 (1955–1957): 867–873, 906–908.

24. Memorandum of Conversation by Goodpaster, 31 July 1956, Whitman File: Diary Series, Box 16. See also Eden to Eisenhower, 27 July 1956, PREM 11/1098; Minutes of Meeting, 27 July 1956, Whitman File: Cabinet Series, Box 7; Memorandum of Conversation by Goodpaster, 28 July 1956, Whitman File: Diary Series, Box 16; and Memorandum of Conversation by Dulles, 30 July 1956, Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 5.

25. Eisenhower to Eden, 3 September 1956, PREM 11/1100. See also Dulles to Murphy, 30 July 1956, and Dulles to Eisenhower, 2 August 1956, Whitman File: Dulles-Herter Series, Box 5; Minutes of Meeting with Dulles, 1 August 1956, PREM 11/1098; Memorandum for the Record, 12 August 1956, Whitman File: Diary Series, Box 17; Position Paper, 11 September 1956, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 7; and Lloyd to Eden, 8–12 October 1956, PREM 11/1102.

26. Summary of Discussion, 1 November 1956, Whitman File: NSC Series, Box 8; and Eisenhower to Dulles, 1 November 1956, Whitman File: International Series, Box 19.

27. Circular Telegrams by JCS, 6 November 1956, RG 218, CCS 381 EMMEA (11-19-47), section 47; Memorandum of Conversation by Goodpaster, 6 November 1956, FRUS 16 (1955–1957): 1014; and Memorandum of Conversation by Goodpaster, 7 November 1956, Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 4.

PART II

Cold War Rivalries

The perceived success of the Iranian coup in 1953 reinforced the Eisenhower administration's emphasis on a more interventionist policy, which, in addition to attempting to form pro-West defense pacts in the Middle East (such as the Baghdad Pact), was characterized by covert activities designed to fight the Soviets in the Third World through tactics short of nuclear confrontation. The Mussadiq crisis seemed to be repeated in various ways in the Middle East throughout the remainder of the decade, some with perceived positive results, some with more negative results. The United States and the Soviet Union had supplanted the British and the French as the primary external players in the Middle East; their involvement in local, inter-Arab, and Arab-Israeli dynamics often heightened the level of tension in the region. Throughout the Cold War, Washington attempted to adjust its policies to these shifting dynamics in a way that would keep the Soviets at bay.

David Lesch examines one of these occasions, the American-Syrian crisis of 1957, within the context of the complex political environment of the Middle East in the 1950s, when the international cold war in the region was at its height and was superimposed on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arab state building, and the emerging inter-Arab cold war. This case study reveals the oftentimes divergent, even contradictory, contextual paradigms of regional events as seen through the prism of the superpower Cold War, when the Eisenhower administration attempted—and failed—to covertly overthrow a regime in Damascus that it thought was getting too close to Moscow. The ensuing course of events shows how a domestic incident can quickly expand into a confrontation between the superpowers at one level, while local players, in particular Egypt's Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, engage in actions at the regional level that actually bring the crisis to an end.

In Chapter 6, Malik Mufti discusses the United States' relationship with pan-Arabism, specifically that proffered by Egyptian president Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser versus that espoused by the Ba'thists in Iraq and Syria following the 1956 Suez crisis and bridging the Arab cold war to the seminal 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Mufti concludes that US policies under Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, as well as those under the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations, which have been roundly criticized in the past (as in this volume), have been to a large extent misinterpreted. Mufti posits that they were actually much more prescient and successful than is popularly perceived, especially as the United States began to see Arab nationalism as an antidote to communism. As others have observed, however, the objectives may have been achieved despite US policy, especially as the dynamics of Malcolm Kerr's "Arab cold war" tended to define the political and diplomatic parameters in the Middle East during this period.[1]

The section concludes with two chapters that broadly examine Middle Eastern politics through the lens of the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. In Chapter 7, Georgiy Mirsky, writing from scholarly examination and personal experience, discusses the motivations, ideological commitment, and interests of Soviet policy toward the Middle East during the Cold War era and the transformation of this policy in the post–Cold War world. Noting that the Kremlin historically preferred to undermine the West through support of national liberation movements (many of which were thoroughly un-Marxist/Leninist), Mirsky observes that the ideological baggage associated with substantiating such policies quickly disappeared following Gorbachev's glasnost (or what Mirsky calls the "de-ideologization" of Soviet foreign policy), clearing the way for a more cooperative relationship with the United States in the Middle East. For a time.

In Chapter 8, Rashid Khalidi analyzes America's Middle Eastern policies through the lens of its Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union. Khalidi pays particular attention to US leaders' support of conservative Islam, such as that practiced in Saudi Arabia, as an ideological counter to communism and Arab nationalism, and thus as a key barrier to Soviet penetration in the region. This approach, though, had important costs for US interests. Not only did it cause US leaders to downplay their support of human rights and democracy advancement in the Middle East, but it helped to empower some of the radical Islamic groups that threaten the United States today. Khalidi also examines at length America's and the Soviet Union's evolving relations with Israel as a component of their Cold War hostilities. The nature and effects of this rivalry not only made peace in Middle East a relatively low priority for the two superpowers but repeatedly undermined the peace process, such as it was. Indeed, the interplay of the regional and international dimensions raised the level of tension in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which contributed to the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Note

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CHAPTER 5

THE 1957 AMERICAN-SYRIAN CRISIS

Globalist Policy in a Regional Reality

David W. Lesch

The Syrian crisis of 1957 (I will refer to it as the American-Syrian crisis) is one of those occasions where the flaws of applying a globalist analytical methodology to the Middle East—in lieu of a serious appreciation of the regional dynamics in the area—are, in retrospect, dramatically revealed. Indeed, the parameters of the crisis itself were determined as much by regional forces as they were by international actors. It was a telling irony, an indication of the policy misconceptions and misapplications surrounding the approach of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration to the Middle East in 1957. What started out as a policy designed to isolate and reduce the power of Egyptian president Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser—that is, the Eisenhower Doctrine—was effectively abandoned during the US-Syrian crisis; thus, a modus vivendi was reached with Egypt, whose help Washington sought during the latter stages of the crisis in order to salvage the situation in Syria. Because of this rather embarrassing experience, the Eisenhower administration began to thoroughly realize that the Middle East was much more complex, not simply an area of East-West ingress.

THE NEW US ALLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The American-Syrian crisis officially began on August 12, 1957, when the Syrian government announced the discovery of a US-engineered attempt to overthrow the regime, which the Eisenhower administration believed was close to becoming a Soviet "outpost" in the region.[1] The next day the Syrian government expelled three US diplomats; the United States responded in kind on August 14, declaring the Syrian ambassador to Washington and his second secretary personae non gratae.

The Eisenhower administration, during the height of the Cold War, steadfastly held out this incident as a sign of unacceptable growth in Soviet influence in Syria (especially since the leadership in Syria was generally pro-Ba'thist, the new army chief of staff, 'Afif al-Bizri, was thought to be a Communist, and Syria and the Soviet Union had agreed to sign a wide-ranging economic accord a week earlier), with possible calamitous repercussions for the US position in the entire Middle East. With the Suez debacle so fresh in their minds, Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, were careful not to appear to be second-generation imperialists and therefore preferred an Arab-led response to "correct" the situation in Syria, either through diplomatic or military pressure. None would be forthcoming.

The administration was confident that it could count on the support of Saudi Arabia to arrange the Arab response, since King Sa'ud, upon his visit to Washington earlier in the year, had been officially touted as an ally of the United States in the Middle East as a counterbalance to Nasser. Winning over Sa'ud had been an unofficial corollary to the Eisenhower Doctrine (announced in January 1957 and passed in March), a rather hastily formulated policy intended to fill the perceived vacuum of power in the Middle East following British and French humiliations at Suez.[2] One of the objectives of the Eisenhower Doctrine was to subvert the alliance Nasser had built to isolate Iraq, then the only pro-Western and Arab Baghdad Pact member. To do this, Washington sought to isolate Nasser—then at his zenith of popularity in the Arab world due to his successes in the Suez crisis—and to halt any further increase in Soviet influence in the Middle East. Thus, Washington had to find an Arab leader who could rival Nasser in prestige and convince other Arab states to turn pro-Western, if not join the Baghdad Pact outright. Because of Saudi Arabia's growing oil wealth and its central position in the Islamic world, Eisenhower and Dulles chose Sa'ud, despite his putative limitations, to rival Nasser, and they systematically set about augmenting his stature in the region.

Sa'ud, however, had his own set of objectives that he wanted to achieve through this anointment.[3] The Saudi monarch (or those within the Saudi ruling circles who were guiding him) saw US support as his stepladder to a leadership position in the Arab world. But by choosing this route, he (or they) also invited an inherent contradiction, one that left the king vulnerable and ultimately led to his failure: in order to challenge and possibly assume Nasser's mantle, Sa'ud had to distance himself from Washington's policies. However, this was a given, for Nasser had long set the standard for Arab nationalist leadership, and any pretender to this position had to sufficiently detach himself from the West. Thus, there ensued a schizophrenic Saudi foreign policy, supporting Washington's interests vis-à-vis a four-power conference meeting (between Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq) in Cairo in February 1957 and the Jordanian crisis in April 1957 (among other things), yet opposing the Eisenhower administration's policies related to the right of Israeli shipping through the Gulf of Aqaba (Sa'ud was against it, Washington for it) and the Buraimi Oasis dispute (which actually caught the United States between two allies since the dispute pitted Great Britain against Saudi Arabia).

King Sa'ud became the Arab spokesman for the Israeli shipping question following Nasser's convenient abdication of that role in the wake of the Suez crisis and the establishment of United Nations (UN) emergency forces in the Sinai Peninsula. That was a brilliant move by Nasser because he took advantage of Sa'ud's strong desire to build up his own Arab nationalist credentials and simultaneously hid his own inability to prevent Israeli ships from passing through the gulf by shifting the blame onto Sa'ud, thereby promoting a rift in US-Saudi relations in the process.

There were those, however, who had serious doubts about Sa'ud's usefulness to the United States in the inter-Arab arena. In Cairo, following the four-power conference, a US diplomat remarked, "If after this meeting [the] United States doesn't fulfill what Saud thinks are its promises, the King could react very dangerously. He has staked his reputation and honor on [the] United States and could switch completely if he feels betrayed."[4] The king, as stated earlier, had his own reasons for cooperating with Washington: he wanted US pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula (portions of which it occupied during the Suez crisis), as well as solutions to the Suez Canal sovereignty question, the shipping dispute, and the Palestinian refugee problem. Success on any one of these issues would have significantly heightened Sa'ud's standing in the Arab world. Although the United States managed to arrange an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai (only after Eisenhower personally intervened with a nationally televised speech designed to pressure Israel), it came through on little else.

Events at the conference also demonstrated that Sa'ud remained ultimately subordinate to Nasser or, more to the point, to Nasser's popular slogans of Arab nationalism and his ability to cause problems for the king within Saudi Arabia. The communiqué emerging from the four-power meeting, despite Sa'ud's attempts to revise it, said nothing about the threat of communism in the Middle East but instead reflected Nasser's stand on foreign policy and inter-Arab issues. This fact was not lost on US embassy officials in Jeddah, who began to see the chinks in the armor of the US-Saudi partnership and warned the US Department of State in April 1957 that "it was clear [that the] Palestine question, Aqaba, Buraimi and in general, old issues of Zionism and imperialism loom large in Saudi thinking and could easily affect our relations quite seriously."[5]

The British, for their part, had been very skeptical of the US plan to build up Sa'ud as a rival to Nasser. As one British official noted, "The Americans may have been deceived both about the area of real agreement between Saudi and American policy and the degree of influence which Saud exercises over his Arab colleagues. Saud must know that Egypt is able to make serious trouble for him in his own country."[6] In retrospect, this observation seems to have been correct on all counts. As a result, by the time the American-Syrian crisis developed, Saudi Arabia and the United States were essentially on different wavelengths regarding Middle East policy. Saudi Arabia and other presumed pro-West Arab states, particularly Iraq, were unwilling to take the leadership role in response to the situation in Syria in August–September 1957. This compelled the Eisenhower administration to adopt an alternative and, as it turned out, much more dangerous path toward "correcting" the situation in Syria.

WASHINGTON'S RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS

Both Eisenhower and Dulles felt that the course of events in Syria in August 1957 was "unacceptable." Both believed the United States "could not afford to have exist a Soviet satellite not contiguous to the Soviet border and in the midst of the already delicate Middle East situation."[7] And both were also anxious to take advantage of the initial trepidation expressed by Syria's neighbors, which would subside, it was thought, if the United States did nothing. The administration also knew its friends in the Middle East were looking to it to lead the way, but Eisenhower and Dulles were looking in the opposite direction for a regional response to the crisis, hamstrung as they were by the specter of Suez and Soviet actions in Hungary.

It is clear that the United States was seriously contemplating direct military action against Syria. In a telephone conversation with the Air Force chief of staff, General Nathan Twining, on August 21, Dulles stated that "we are thinking of the possibility of fairly drastic action."[8] On the same day, Dulles wrote to British foreign minister Selwyn Lloyd that "it seems to us that there is now little hope of correction from within and that we must think in terms of the external assets reflected by the deep concern of the Moslem states. . . . We must perhaps be prepared to take some serious risks to avoid even greater risks and dangers later on."[9] British prime minister Harold Macmillan commented on August 27 that "this question is going to be of tremendous importance. The Americans are taking it very seriously, and talking about the most drastic measures—Suez in reverse. If it were not serious . . . it would be rather comic."[10]

The desire for a regional response supported by Saudi Arabia, however, was most clearly demonstrated in a letter from Eisenhower to Sa'ud dated August 21, 1957: "We believe that it is highly preferable that Syria's neighbors should be able to deal with this problem without the necessity for any outside intervention. In view of the special position of Your Majesty as Keeper of the Holy Places of Islam, I trust that you will exert your great influence to the end that the atheistic creed of Communism will not become entrenched at a key position in the Moslem world."[11]

The constraints upon the willingness and ability of Sa'ud to play this role and the misperception by the administration that the king had significant influence in the Middle East eliminated any hope for a regional response. Macmillan wrote Dulles on August 23 that the "essential point is that the other Arabs should expose the pretensions of the present Syrian regime to be good Arab nationalists and should denounce them for what they are, namely, Communists and Communist stooges."[12] The problem was that Syria's neighbors did not agree with Macmillan's assessment. The White House received two notes from Sa'ud on August 25, one that dealt with the shipping question and the other with Syria. Although their contents are unknown, they were described as being "couched in extremely tough language" and suggesting that Sa'ud was placing the blame for the events in Syria squarely on the United States and/or was presenting the administration with a quid pro quo of his own connected with the shipping dispute.[13] In response, the State Department wrote to its embassy in Jeddah: "We find it very disappointing indications you have received of King's attitude toward developments in Syria. . . . In interests [of] Saudi Arabia and in those of all NE [Near East] states we are anxious that [the] King use his political and moral authority to rally opposition in area to present Syrian regime and to facilitate generating of pressures designed to isolate Syria and to work toward an improvement of situation in that country."[14] The US ambassador in Jeddah emphasized to the king the danger of communism and Soviet influence in the Middle East while trying to play down the relationship with Israel, but to no avail.

POLICY TRANSFORMATION IN WASHINGTON

Eisenhower faced two major problems with military intervention in Syria. First, during the Suez crisis and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, he had supported the principle that "military force was not a justifiable means for settling disputes."[15] But he was also convinced that Syria was on the road to becoming a Soviet satellite, and he was determined not to let this happen; he was not going to be accused of "losing" any country to communism, much as the Republicans had rhetorically bashed the Truman administration for "losing" China. Thus, the president had to find a way to rationalize this dilemma, first to himself, then to the outside world. He did this by viewing the Syrian situation as inherently different from the Suez crisis. The Arabs, he postulated, were "convinced" that Syria had been clandestinely invaded through infiltration and subversion, whereas during Suez they believed Nasser had acted well within his rights in nationalizing the Suez Canal Company. Eisenhower decided that Arab action against Syria "would be *basically* defensive in nature, particularly because they intended to react to *anticipated aggression,* rather than to commit a naked aggression" (emphasis added).[16] The sticky question of how to deal with subversion, one that critics of the Eisenhower Doctrine had asked when it was announced, had again come to the forefront; the administration was forced to answer it. Now, however, instead of the pretext being an open attack of one country against another, the administration was preparing the way for possible military intervention on the grounds of *anticipated aggression.* All the United States needed was an arbitrary finding that Syria was controlled by international communism.

The second problem facing Eisenhower revolved around the fact that no Arab state was willing to assume a leadership role in response to the crisis. This was apparent when the White House sent an experienced and respected diplomat, Loy Henderson, who was then deputy undersecretary for administration, to the Middle East to sound out Washington's allies in the region regarding the Syrian situation. Unexpectedly, he did not have a solid proposal to put forth to the conferees when he arrived in Istanbul on August 24. In fact, the British ambassador to Turkey described Henderson as having been "inadequately briefed and rather devoid of ideas."[17] The conferees had obviously expected Henderson to arrive with a proposal, but none was forthcoming, and all they could agree on was that something had to be done soon. The United States had counted on Iraqi-Jordanian cooperation against Syria, but Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah of Iraq admitted there was no trust between Jordan's King Hussein and himself.[18] The Jordanians insisted that Saudi support was the key to the whole situation; without it Hussein could only leave Turkey to vacation in Italy and Spain, a move that led Eisenhower to conclude that "contrary to what we had been led to believe [Jordan] did not want to join in any move against Syria."[19]

Within the ruling circles in the Arab world, differences of opinion could also be found as to the seriousness of the Syrian situation. They had to be wary of the sentiments of the populace, who were largely sympathetic with the Syrian regime. Henderson was reported to have been shocked by the negative reaction of the Lebanese press to his visit to Beirut, a reaction that was typical below the government level in most Arab states at the time. Nowhere was this more evident than in Iraq; the Iraqi government's refusal to lead an all-Arab response against Syria was as important to the disruption of the Eisenhower administration's plans vis-à-vis Syria as Saudi Arabia's decision not to follow the US lead, for if the administration was depending on Saudi political and economic support, it was also depending on Iraq to provide the muscle needed to intimidate or take direct action against Syria.

Henderson's findings left the White House confused. Referring to Henderson's trip to the Middle East, the president would write in his memoirs that "whereas early information had indicated the possibility of prompt Iraqi military action with the Turks abstaining, there were now hints of a reversal of this arrangement."[20] The United States at first wanted Turkey to play a secondary role, conscious of the fact that many Arabs still had a strong distaste for the Turks that was rooted in the days of Ottoman rule, in addition to the fact that action by a North Atlantic Treaty Organization member might enlarge the dispute to the international level with possible Soviet involvement. However, the Turkish government, already faced with a border with the Soviet Union to the north, was very concerned about a possible Soviet satellite coming into being to the south.

With the failure of the Henderson mission, the administration, especially John Foster Dulles, reverted to standard Cold War thinking. From this point on, it viewed the US-Syrian crisis as it related to the Soviet Union, with all the trappings befitting the "Munich mentality," something that would have a particularly telling impact on the Turks. In a letter to Harold Macmillan discussing Henderson's findings, Dulles wrote the following:

> There is nothing that looks particularly attractive and the choice of policy will be hard. We are not completely satisfied with any of the alternatives which have thus far been suggested. There are risks involved in and objection found to all of them. We are continuing to explore other possibilities. . . . I do not suggest that we have reached any conclusion in favor of encouraging positive action. However, Loy Henderson has the impression that the Turks are desperately serious about this situation, and I do not think either of our governments wants to try to impose what could be another Munich.[21]

How Dulles concluded that the Turks should be given the green light to proceed militarily against Syria if they chose to do so, thereby contradicting the rationale of an all-Arab response, is not the question that should be addressed at this time.[22] Suffice it to say that, having failed to acquire the support of Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the administration looked elsewhere to "correct" the situation in Syria. However, this move raised the crisis—already elevated from the bilateral level to the regional level—from the regional level to the international level, as the Soviet Union felt compelled to intervene in order to protect its potential client state and enhance its standing in the Third World. The Kremlin directly warned Turkey, and by implication the United States, to stay out of Syria. And, contrary to many previous studies that conclude the Soviet Union purposefully exaggerated the crisis after the climax had already passed in order to gain propaganda points, Moscow quite probably saved Syria from external intervention. Outside Turkey, the players in the region itself were more than ready to end the crisis, but Dulles insisted on some kind of "victory" over Syria, and thus the Soviet Union, and this raised the level of international tension.

SA'UD TAKES THE INITIATIVE

As the United States and the Soviet Union were indulging in their superpower standoff, diplomacy shifted back to the regional level as Saudi Arabia entered the scene. Sa'ud saw the incident as an opportune moment to assert himself in the inter-Arab arena by mediating a percolating crisis. On the more practical side, he also wanted to salvage his assets in Syria and pull it again toward the Saudi orbit and away from Nasser's influence. Iraq was unable to do this because its government was irredeemably regarded as a lackey of imperialism—in addition to the fact that it had lost most of its "assets" in Syria as a result of the exiles and trial verdicts following the exposure of the failed British-Iraqi plot (Operation Straggle) to overthrow the Syrian regime in late 1956. However, Sa'ud had distanced himself from Washington sufficiently to act the part of an Arab nationalist leader, and he was totally at odds with the British.[23] It was important that he also maintained valuable leverage over other Arab states, namely, that Saudi Arabia was one of the linchpins to the Arab coalition the Eisenhower administration had hoped to form (i.e., if Syria and Egypt did not support his mediatory efforts he would throw his weight behind the US initiative). As expected, the Syrian regime, which had repeatedly branded Sa'ud an imperialist tool and a US lackey earlier in the year, started praising the Saudi monarch for his farsightedness, compassion, and commitment to Arab causes. The government began to vociferously support Saudi Arabia's position on the shipping and Buraimi questions and initiated a back-and-forth stream of diplomatic visits between Damascus and Riyadh.

En route to receive "medical treatment" in West Germany, Sa'ud made a twenty-four-hour stopover in Beirut on September 7 to consult with various Lebanese officials and, almost assuredly, with Syrian officials as well (an especially likely event in light of the somewhat coordinated sequence of events that transpired soon thereafter). The Syrians, who earlier in the year would have viewed Sa'ud's mediatory efforts as unwarranted interference in Syrian affairs, now publicly welcomed this visit. Almost overnight, the Lebanese, Jordanian, and Iraqi governments started to back away from their earlier condemnation of Syria and began to make noises in support of the Syrian regime. The Saudi ambassador to Syria stated on September 10 that his country would "spare no effort to support, back, and aid" Syria should it be the object of outside aggression.[24] On September 12, a Saudi official was quoted as saying that

"Saudi Arabia will not stand with hands folded in the event of any aggression against Syria."[25] Also on September 12, Sa'ud reportedly sent a note to Eisenhower urging patience and forbearance in dealing with the Syrian situation, and he claimed that reports of the Syrian threat had been exaggerated.[26] As the climax to his diplomatic efforts, Sa'ud appeared at the airport in Damascus on September 25, 1957, to "consult" with Syrian officials. (Iraqi premier 'Ali Jawdat arrived the following day.) Arab newspapers across the Middle East, including Egyptian ones, hailed Sa'ud's efforts.

NASSER'S RIPOSTE

This course of events was something Nasser was unwilling to accept, for he had worked extremely hard to keep Syria out of the West's sphere of influence (as well as that of Iraq) and to place pro-Nasserist Ba'thist and army elements in the Syrian hierarchy. Now he was in danger of "losing" Syria to Saudi Arabia or even the Soviet Union.[27] As early as September 11, 1957, Nasser was scheming with Syrian officials to counter Sa'ud. Nasser, along with his commander in chief, 'Abd al-Hakim 'Amr, and the chief of staff of the joint Egyptian-Syrian command, Hafiz Isma'il, met in Cairo with the Syrian chief of staff, 'Afif al-Bizri, and Colonel 'Abd al-Hamid Sarraj, who was the head of Syrian intelligence and the real power in Syria. At this meeting plans were drawn up for a dramatic move to reestablish Nasser's preeminence in the Arab world. He also intended to build up the pro-Nasser army/Ba'thist faction in Syria (through Bizri and Sarraj) in order to check Saudi advances through President Shukri al-Quwatli and Prime Minister Sabri al-'Asali, as well as Soviet influence through Khalid al-'Azm and Communist deputy Khalid Baqdash. Nasser thus began a diplomatic offensive that was at first subtle so as not to appear to be in conflict with Sa'ud's popular mediation efforts. In addition, Nasser was well aware of the Saudi monarch's relationship with the Americans and probably realized that he too would benefit from Sa'ud's mediation, for the Egyptian president did not want to be in a position where he would be forced to come to Syria's aid against fellow Arab states, or worse, against Turkey or the United States. Nasser also did not want to play second fiddle to the only country really capable of protecting Syria—the Soviet Union—and so he would cleverly allow Sa'ud to commit to a peaceful resolution before making a move.

That move was to send troops to the Syrian coastal city of Latakia on October 13, ostensibly to defend Syria against Turkish "aggression" (the Turks, with encouragement from Washington, had been steadily massing forces along the border). This was done while Sa'ud was in Beirut attending a soccer match. The contrast of Sa'ud at a sports event and Nasser sending Egyptian troops to the aid of a sister state threatened by outside forces did not go unnoticed, as was, most certainly, Nasser's intent. Helped by a massive propaganda campaign, Egypt became the Arab state that matched words with deeds and honored its defense commitments. *Al-Ahram* (Egypt's government-controlled newspaper) printed on October 14 that the action showed that the defense agreement between Egypt and Syria (entered November 1955) was not "merely ink on paper . . . it is a reality." The Syrian press hailed the arrival of Egyptian troops, and

Damascus Radio simultaneously intensified its charges against Turkey for its "provocations" and "aggressions" on the border. On October 17, Syria placed the army on alert and arms were distributed to civilian groups (the Popular Resistance Organizations); it would have seemed even more awkward than it already was to have Syrian troops in a state of unreadiness at the exact moment that Egyptian troops were supposedly helping Syria face the imminent threat from Turkey. Had the threat been real, of course, Nasser would not have sent his troops. The Soviet Union had already explicitly warned Turkey and the United States against any action vis-à-vis Syria, so in a sense Nasser was operating under a Soviet defense umbrella. That it was more of a political than a military move is borne out by the fact that only about two thousand Egyptian troops landed at Latakia, which was a woefully inadequate number for the supposed task. Nasser had effectively turned the tables on Sa'ud and won a tremendous propaganda victory.

In addition to upstaging Sa'ud and regaining the diplomatic initiative in the Arab world, Nasser had other reasons for sending Egyptian troops to Syria at this particular moment. With Egyptian troops on the ground in Syria, Nasser was in a position to regain his influence in the country, manipulate the political process, and protect his Ba'thist/army assets. It also prevented Bizri's advancement in the Syrian power structure through the vehicle of the joint command (Nasser reportedly did not trust Bizri and shared the US view that he was a Communist).[28] The move was also designed to solidify support for Nasser's preferred candidate, Akram al-Hawrani, in the October 14, 1957, election for speaker of the Chamber of Deputies against incumbent Nazim al-Qudsi, a leading member of the traditionally pro-Iraqi Populist Party. Hawrani won, though by only a slim margin, so Nasser's timely assistance could have been a decisive factor in the outcome. It was important to Nasser to have Hawrani in the position of the speaker of the chamber, for it was, ex officio, the vice presidency of the Syrian Republic, and if the president became ill or was away, the speaker would undertake his functions.[29] With Quwatli in his seventies and often ill (in a real or diplomatic sense), this position assumed added significance. Hawrani, as a leader of the Ba'th Party and the key to its link with the military, had essentially become the number-two figure in Syria, and he was therefore in the catbird seat for the next presidential election. In this way, Nasser and his Syrian supporters could continue to keep the "Russian millionaire," Khalid al-'Azm, from his longtime ambition.

As mentioned, Nasser was intent on securing the Ba'th Party's position in Syria. In this fashion, he could enhance the ability of the Ba'thists to withstand and reverse growing Soviet influence in Syria and solidify the country's attachment to Egypt. The fact that the Egyptian troops immediately moved inland toward Aleppo only supports this assertion. Nasser and his Ba'thist allies believed that they could help their cause in the soon-to-be-held elections in Aleppo by staging a dramatic "rescue," with the possibility of changing the view of most Aleppans toward Egypt and thus providing more votes for Ba'thist candidates. It is not surprising that the Egyptians and Ba'thists exaggerated the Turkish threat, giving plenty of airtime to the purported Turkish battle cry "On to Aleppo!" Nasser and the Ba'thists, as well as the conservatives, were clearly concerned about Communist advances in Syria (particularly prevalent in northern Syria, including Aleppo) and the concomitant increase in Soviet influence.[30] The Ba'th Party had successfully allied itself with the Communists to combat imperialism and old-guard Syrian politicians, with the Communists accruing proportionately more power as Syria's relationship with the Soviet Union tightened during the crisis. After this, the Ba'thists decided to unofficially split from the Communists and utilize Nasser's own willingness to prevent Syria from falling under the influence of the Kremlin. All of this maneuvering proved unnecessary, however, as al-'Asali, bowing to pressure from all sides, indefinitely postponed the elections, thus buying more time for the Ba'thists to figure out a way to prevent their onetime allies from leapfrogging them. The landing of Egyptian troops returned Nasser to prominence in Syria, which made Ba'thist control and union with Egypt more palatable to many and inevitable to all.

The Egyptian troop landing at Latakia took Sa'ud totally by surprise. At a loss, he could only offer to put his armed forces at Syria's disposal, but this was hopelessly outshone by Nasser's initiative, and it was clear to all that the latter was now dictating the pace and direction of the regional diplomatic game. Evidence of this came on October 16, 1957, when King Hussein informed the ambassadors of Turkey, the United States, and Britain that Jordan would fully support Syria in the event of an attack and that Syria's independence should be maintained. Iraq publicly restated its support for Syria; even the Lebanese government reportedly gave Syrian officials assurances that they would offer assistance in case of an attack.[31]

The information disseminated from Cairo also focused at this time on linking Israel and Turkey (with US support) to an alleged plot against Syria, with reports that Israeli chief of staff Moshe Dayan of the Israeli Defense Forces had paid a visit to Turkey to discuss such plans. Nasser effectively portrayed Egypt as the savior of Syria and Arabism not only against Turkey and the "imperialists" but also against public enemy no. 1, Israel, which compelled other Arab states to follow his lead. In addition, a Turkish delegation visited Saudi Arabia on October 24 as part of Turkey's support for Sa'ud's mediation; however, it cast the king in a negative light in the Arab world since he was personally negotiating with the country that Egypt had effectively portrayed as an aggressor and imperialist tool. Sa'ud's diplomatic maneuvering was constrained in various ways; namely, he did not and could not detach himself completely from the United States, and his efforts therefore seemed to be slow and plodding, especially in comparison to Nasser's actions on October 13 and after. The king had to walk a tightrope to maintain a balance between Arab nationalist forces, on the one hand, and the West and pro-West elements in the Arab world on the other. Nasser, however, did not have this constraint, which allowed him to take the bold and decisive step of sending his forces into Syria. Nasser also had the military wherewithal to do so; Sa'ud did not, and the only role the king could play was that of mediator. Sa'ud's fatal problem was that he could accomplish his objectives only at Nasser's expense. This compelled Nasser to respond to the challenge in a way that Sa'ud could not, and, for all intents and purposes, the "Arab cold war" had already begun.

US-EGYPTIAN MODUS VIVENDI?

The American-Syrian crisis showed on several occasions how similar objectives can sometimes make strange bedfellows. Both Egypt and the United States were very interested in keeping Syria from becoming communist and from falling too deeply into the Soviet orbit. In fact, a confidant of Nasser informed US officials on December 11, 1957, that the Egyptian president

> had investigated recent information we [the United States] had given him relative to the communist connections of [Syrian chief of staff Afif al-] Bizri and is now convinced Bizri [is] a communist and that something must be done about it. . . . He [Nasser] asks of us only that we keep hands off Syria for a maximum period of three months and particularly that we do nothing which could have unintentional effect of making heroes out of Bizri, [Communist Deputy] Bakdash and [pro-Soviet] Khalid Al Azm.[32]

The Egyptian official suggested that there were "several ways of attacking the Syrian problem," but the "only country with capability [to] succeed, and which can do so with minimal repercussions is Egypt. Of [the] countries primarily concerned with [the] Syrian situation, US and Egypt have greatest interest in ensuring that country [has a] stable, anti-communist government."[33] On December 10, the US ambassador to Egypt, Raymond Hare, had a conversation with ʻAli Sabri, a member of the inner circle of the Revolutionary Command Council (the ruling group within Egypt), in which the latter stated that Egypt had more reason to worry than the United States regarding the prospect of Arab nationalism taking too much of a left-hand turn, since Egypt "had to live in the area and could not escape the consequences."[34] The State Department reacted by stating, "We wish [to] avoid impeding any Egyptian efforts to bring about change and in particular appreciate considerations re[garding] Bizri, Bakdash and Azm."[35]

The three months Nasser had asked for was one more than he actually needed. The long courtship over Egypt and Syria's union was finally consummated on February 1, 1958, producing the United Arab Republic. The regional solution to the Syrian problem that Eisenhower and Dulles so desperately wanted had occurred, albeit from an unexpected source. The Eisenhower administration calculated that if it could not keep the Soviets out of Syria, it might as well trust the job to someone who could. The United States had tried just about everything short of committing US forces to keep Syria from becoming a Soviet base in the Middle East. Dulles turned to a policy of "containment-plus," keeping the "virus" from spreading out from Syria. Nasser had successfully kept the Soviets at arm's length in Egypt; maybe his stature and power in the Arab world was enough to do the same in Syria.

The US-Egyptian rapprochement did not occur overnight and, at least from the US perspective, was by default bred more out of necessity than prescience. There had been signs during the crisis that their coinciding interests vis-à-vis Syria might produce some sort of a working relationship. In early October, the State Department publicly expressed its desire for closer relations with Egypt. Egyptian press and radio comment reacted favorably to this and generally welcomed US friendship. A piece in *Al-Sha'b* stated on October 12 that Egypt "is anxious to have good relations with the United States and other states." The next day, *al-Jumhuriya* printed that "we antagonize those who antagonize us and pacify those who pacify us."

This budding cooperation was clearly evident early on at the UN debate over the Syrian situation. The Egyptian representative to the UN, Mahmoud Fawzi, apparently told UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld that the Egyptians were doing their best to keep the Syrians from proceeding with their complaint in the UN General Assembly, including trying to dissuade them from insisting that an investigatory commission be sent to the Turkish border.[36] They felt the debate would not be confined to the relatively narrow Syrian-Turkish item but would expand to cover broader issues in the Middle East that could place Nasser in some rather uncomfortable diplomatic positions, especially on the Arab-Israeli front. Fawzi also told the secretary-general that he was "bitter" over how the Soviets were forcing the Syrians' hand in the UN.[37] Indeed, Soviet guidance of Syrian actions at the UN seemed to have awakened the US and Egyptian delegations to the possibility of limited cooperation.

From the Eisenhower administration's point of view, cooperation with Egypt became more desirable after Sa'ud's mediation failed and Nasser regained his paramount position in the Arab world after the landing of Egyptian troops at Latakia. Evidence of this is found in a summary record of conversations US officials had had with Fawzi. One of these stated:

> We told Fawzi in our opinion his statement . . . was restrained and we appreciated [the] tone he had struck in it. We said we believed objectives which had outlined to us for handling this item [Syrian complaint in the UN] . . . were shared by U.S. Fawzi said Egypt and U.S. share desire to see in Middle East peaceful, constructive, independent states, free from outside interference of any kind. . . . Fawzi said he appreciated our initiative and our approach which, as far as he was concerned, represented a clean slate from which to start.[38]

The Eisenhower administration began to realize what the Egyptians already knew—the latter were the only ones capable of preventing an increase of Soviet influence in Syria. Fawzi's actions at the UN (and other indications from Cairo) convinced Dulles that Nasser was sincere in his desire to "save" Syria. Having exhausted all other reasonable avenues, Dulles had no choice.

Recognizing the new political balance in the Middle East, *al-Ahram* stated on November 6, 1957, that the Soviet Union "may be on its way to the conquest of space but America can certainly conquer people's hearts." Nasser, however, had just traded one headache for another with his reluctant acquiescence to the union with Syria. Most Syrians saw union with Egypt as a necessary step to avoid more internal turmoil and external interference. But for Egypt and Nasser, it was a political disaster that directly contributed to the heightening tension of the Arab cold war and the environment for the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Nasser's diplomatic acumen in this particular episode certainly enabled him to achieve his immediate objectives, and it had short-term positive results. But the long-term implications were ultimately negative, as it established a level of responsibility and popularity that Nasser spent the rest of his tenure in power trying to live up to—and never quite succeeding.

CONCLUSION

With Nasser's fait accompli, and lacking any alternative, Sa'ud continued to pursue his mediation policy, but its effects were much more keenly felt in the UN than in the Middle East. Blocked at the domestic level by the disclosure of the coup attempt in Syria, at the regional level by the actions of Sa'ud and Nasser, among other persons, and at the international level by the threats emanating from the Kremlin, the Eisenhower administration opted to pursue "victory" in the UN. In doing this, however, the United States unwittingly reignited at the international level what was a diminishing crisis by early to mid-October. Sa'ud's official offer to mediate the Syrian-Turkish crisis (as it was termed at the time) actually had the effect of lessening tensions at the UN, as other Arab delegates began to support his efforts. On October 22, 1957, the UN General Assembly officially suspended debate on the Syrian-Turkish dispute pending the outcome of Sa'ud's mediation. It would come to absolutely nothing, as Syria politely rejected his intervention, but it did provide a respite in the UN that allowed the United States and the Soviet Union to reassess their positions and separately agree to just let the crisis peter out.[39] Soviet general secretary Nikita Khrushchev realized the untenable situation in the UN in the wake of Sa'ud's efforts. His objective of deterring the Turks and the Americans from intervening in Syria had been realized, with the concomitant rise in Soviet prestige in the Arab world and influence in Syria. It was time to end the crisis before the Soviets lost at the UN much of what they had won in the Middle East. With this in mind, Khrushchev unexpectedly appeared at a reception at the Turkish embassy in Moscow on October 29, unofficially ending the American-Syrian crisis.

Regional players had largely dictated the pace and scope of the crisis, whereas the global superpowers, especially the United States, initiated policies in a reactionary fashion that only escalated tensions to higher and more dangerous levels. The Eisenhower Doctrine signified a globalist application of foreign policy to the Middle East, focusing on the Soviet threat, something that most Arabs thought was absolutely incongruous considering the fact that Egypt had just been attacked by Britain, France, and Israel and not by the Soviet bloc or Communist forces. By remaining at, and constantly retreating to, this analytical level, US policymakers failed to appreciate the agendas of regional actors that, in many cases, had nothing to do with the East-West conflict yet set the parameters of the political dynamics of the Middle East.

In Iran, the Eisenhower administration was successful in blunting a nationalist movement that was deemed susceptible to Communist takeover; however, this did not prevent Iranian disillusionment with, and ultimately anger toward, the United States for betraying its stated principles of democracy and self-determination, a hostility that poured forth in 1979 with the added venom of twenty-six years of repression. In Syria, the United States was unable to curb the rise of leftist Arab nationalist forces and ironically found itself ultimately, and indirectly, through Nasser's sangfroid, relying on a nationalist movement to prevent the Soviet Union from expanding its position in the Middle East; the hostility engendered by a feeling of imperialist victimization nonetheless was created, severely hampering US-Syrian relations for more than a generation. The circumstances surrounding Syria during this turbulent period compelled its leaders to think in terms of national survival rather than national development, preordaining choices and options that invariably sent it down a path trodden by many other Third World nations caught in the vice of the Cold War: stunted economic growth, regional conflict and hostility, and superpower confrontation.

Notes

1. For a detailed examination of this subject and the events that led up to it, see David W. Lesch, *Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992).

2. The Eisenhower Doctrine essentially offered American military and economic aid to those nations in the Middle East that requested it in order to resist the advances of other states who were, in the official opinion of the administration, dominated by "international communism."

3. On Sa'ud's relationship with the United States and his role in the American-Syrian crisis, see David W. Lesch, "The Saudi Role in the American-Syrian Crisis of 1957," *Middle East Policy* 1, no. 3 (Sept. 1992): 33–48.

4. Foreign Reports, letter to John Foster Dulles from Harry Kern, February 28, 1957, John Foster Dulles Papers, Box 118, John Foster Dulles Collection, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

5. Telegram from the embassy in Saudi Arabia to the Department of State, April 11, 1957, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957* (hereinafter FRUS), 8:492.

6. British Foreign Office (FO) Report, "Middle East: The Nature of the Threat and Means of Countering It" (in preparation for the Bermuda Conference with the United States in March 1957), March 8, 1957, FO 371/127755, Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, London (hereinafter PRO); Foreign Office Reports in preparation for Anglo-American talks on June 12–14, 1957, "Measures to Ensure Continued Access to Middle East Petroleum Resources," FO 371/127756, PRO; and "Saudi Arabia and Buraimi and Their Relations to Kuwait," FO 371/127756, PRO.

7. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, DC, August 19, 1957, 3:45 p.m., FRUS 8:340–341.

8. Dulles telephone call to General Twining, August 21, 1957, John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls Series, Box 7, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS (hereinafter DDEL).

9. Dulles to Selwyn Lloyd, August 21, 1957, Ann Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 7, DDEL.

10. Harold Macmillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956–1959* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 279–280.

11. Eisenhower to King Sa'ud, August 21, 1957, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 42, DDEL.

12. British Foreign Office, August 23, 1957, FO 371/128224, PRO; also, Macmillan, *Riding the Storm,* 279.

13. Memorandum of a Conversation with the President, White House, Washington, DC, August 28, 1957, FRUS 8:659–660.

14. Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, August 27, 1957, FRUS 8:500–502.

15. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace, 1956–1961* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 198.

16. Ibid.

17. British Consulate—Istanbul, August 25, 1957, FO 371/128224, PRO.

18. As a US official pointed out, Iraqi troops would have a much easier time penetrating Syria through Jordan than traversing the vast desert and roadless space directly across the Syrian-Iraqi border. Memorandum of a Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, White House, Washington, DC, September 2, 1957, FRUS 8:669–670.

19. British Embassy—Amman, August 28, 1957, FO 371/128225, PRO, and Eisenhower, *Waging Peace,* 200–201.

20. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace,* 200.

21. Letter from Secretary of State Dulles to Prime Minister Macmillan, September 5, 1957, FRUS 8:681–682.

22. For a detailed analysis of this policy transformation, see Lesch, *Syria and the United States.* There are no "smoking gun" documents to prove that the United States gave or was prepared to give the Turks the green light, but there is enough circumstantial evidence, as well as confirmations acquired from players who were intimately involved in the process at the time (who wish to remain anonymous), that I am convinced that the Eisenhower administration did so and that it was only Soviet threats against Turkey that prevented what could have been a very dangerous situation from developing. For a particularly revealing document on the subject, see Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Turkey, September 10, 1957, FRUS 8:691–693.

23. On October 6, 1957, the Saudi government officially denied its acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine, countering what had been taken for granted in diplomatic circles since Sa'ud's visit to Washington in February, even though the king never publicly announced his country's adherence to it.

24. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), September 11, 1957, A2.

25. FBIS, September 16, 1957, A1.

26. *New York Times,* September 15, 1957.

27. If Syria was "lost" to Saudi Arabia, it is likely that pro-West elements would have gained in strength and possibly even assumed power (with the issues of union with Iraq and membership in the Baghdad Pact resurfacing), but there is nothing to suggest that Saudi Arabia and the United States were working together toward this goal; that is, Washington did not support Sa'ud's mediation until it became useful to do so to escape from a United Nations dilemma later during the US-Syrian crisis. Indeed, there exists much evidence that Riyadh and Washington were at odds with each other during most of the crisis period. See Lesch, *Syria and the United States*, 190–209.

28. Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, December 11, 1957, FRUS 8:744–746.

29. "Syria's Egyptian Visitors," *Economist,* October 19, 1957, 230–231.

30. Elias Murqus, a former Syrian Communist, offers an interesting criticism of the Communist Party's activities at this time. He felt its overaggressiveness vis-à-vis the Ba'th seriously

damaged its chances to gain power. *Tarikh al-ahzab al-shuyu'iyya fi al-watan al-'arabi (History of the Communist Parties in the Arab World)* (Beirut: al-Jam'a al-Lubaniya, 1964), 91–92.

31. FBIS, October 17, 1957, A2.

32. Telegram from the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State, December 11, 1957, FRUS 8:744–746.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Egypt, December 12, 1957, FRUS 8:746–747.

36. British United Nations (UN) Delegation—New York, October 16, 1957, FO 371/128242, PRO.

37. British UN Delegation—New York, October 18, 1957, FO 371/128242, PRO. The US delegate at the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, told Dulles that "Bitar is here and is lonely and overwhelmed by Soviet overtures and would like to talk with someone from the West." Telephone Call from Lodge to Dulles, October 2, 1957, 5:40 p.m., John Foster Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls Series, Box 7, DDEL.

38. Telegram from the Mission at the United Nations to the Department of State, October 24, 1957, FRUS 8:728–729.

39. British UN Delegation—New York, October 28, 1957, FO 371/128244, PRO.

CHAPTER 6

THE UNITED STATES AND NASSERIST PAN-ARABISM

Malik Mufti

In this chapter I argue that US Middle East policy from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s consisted primarily of safeguarding US interests by accommodating the populist pan-Arabism of Egyptian president Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser. After its initial attempt (1955–1956) to bring together all regional actors in a grand pro-US alliance collapsed, Washington watched with dismay as Soviet influence appeared to advance, first in Syria and then in Iraq. Nasser successfully played on these fears to enlist US support for his regional ambitions from 1958 to 1962. Around 1963, however, when Nasser himself became a threat to its interests, the United States started building up his pro-Western rivals in Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia while entrusting the campaign of liquidating the remnants of Arab communism to the Baʿth Party in Syria and Iraq.

WASHINGTON'S INITIAL FOUR-PRONGED POLICY

US interests in the Middle East in the 1950s can be boiled down to two strategic objectives, both of which emerged after World War II. First, the United States was intent on keeping Saudi Arabia and its smaller oil-rich neighbors securely under the US umbrella; and second, it wanted to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence in the Arab world. Initially—roughly from 1947 to 1955—Washington relied on a four-pronged policy approach to accomplish those objectives. First, it sought to maintain the regional status quo by opposing the pan-Arab ambitions of the Hashemites in

Baghdad and Amman—particularly given their Hijazi roots. As a 1950 US Department of State paper on Syrian-Iraqi union put it at the time: “There would thus be no contribution to United States interests in giving encouragement to the movement, and any suggestion of intervention by this Government in favor of [a] union [of Arab states] would undoubtedly incur deep resentment among peoples of the Near East, particularly in Saudi Arabia where U.S. strategic interests are of vital importance.”[1]

Second, Washington decided instead to support, wherever possible, leaders whose populist nationalism gave them credibility with their peoples but whose visions did not extend beyond modern reforms within their countries. In other words, US support went to anti-Communists whose pan-Arab rhetoric remained just that. In Egypt, the Americans pinned even greater hopes on Colonel Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser and his fellow officers who overthrew the monarchy in 1952. Contacts between the two sides predated the coup and intensified significantly during the years immediately following it. During this time, Nasser enlisted Washington’s support for his fledgling regime and for its struggle to free Egypt from lingering British influence by convincing the Americans that his interests and theirs coincided on most issues. US support continued even after Nasser—having consolidated his hold on power—outlined Cairo’s new foreign policy orientation in his famous speech of July 23, 1954. Henceforth, Nasser stated, his government would abandon its isolationist outlook and strive for Arab solidarity under Egyptian leadership. Thus, Wilbur Crane Eveland, a US intelligence operative in the region at the time, remembered that US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) propaganda experts were kept busy during late 1954 “dreaming up ways to popularize Nasser’s government in Egypt and the Arab world.”[2] They apparently went to unusual lengths to maintain Nasser’s nationalist credibility.

The third element of US policy during this period envisaged bringing all the “progressive” but pro-Western Arab regimes that could be sustained into a regional anti-Soviet alliance modeled on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The fourth and final element was a logical extension of this third objective: avoid regional conflicts that would weaken the alliance, such as those that would pit members against one another and force Washington to choose sides, thereby creating opportunities for Moscow to gain influence.

COLLAPSE OF THE FOUR-PRONGED STRATEGY

Unfortunately for the United States, its four-pronged strategy soon fell victim to the conflicting objectives of other regional actors. Nasser, for one, realized that the optimal strategy for him would be to play the two superpowers off one another and to extend Egyptian influence abroad, even if that brought him into conflict with other US allies. Iraq’s Hashemites still harbored dreams of ruling a greater Arab homeland, dreams that of course conflicted with Nasser’s hegemonic dream. In this they received limited backing from the British, who viewed Iraq as the linchpin to their own regional ambitions and were therefore willing to support the extension of Hashemite influence—primarily through the Baghdad Pact—so long as it did not result in actual border changes (for example, with Kuwait). The Saudis, who initially welcomed

Nasser's foray into Arab politics as a counterweight to their nemeses, the Hashemites, gradually began to fear Egyptian expansionism as well.

Most decisively, Israel's concern about the close relationship between Washington and Cairo led it to pursue an aggressive policy culminating in the Gaza raid of February 28, 1955, its first major engagement with Egypt since 1948 and a humiliating blow to Nasser's prestige. The raid scuttled Washington's attempts to focus regional attention on the Soviet threat, brought the Arab-Israeli conflict to the fore, and initiated an arms race that forced Washington to choose sides among friends in the Middle East. Thus, Israel succeeded in its primary objective of driving a wedge between Cairo and Washington. When Nasser's subsequent request for US weapons received a negative response, he announced six months later that he would be purchasing arms from the Soviet bloc instead. Further setbacks, such as the Aswan Dam financing dispute and the failure (despite private lip service by both sides)[3] of a secret US attempt to mediate the dispute between Egypt and Israel in early 1956, led US secretary of state John Foster Dulles to conclude:

> In view of the negative outcome of our efforts to bring Colonel Nasser to adopt a policy of conciliation toward Israel, we should, I believe, now adjust certain of our Near Eastern policies, as indicated below. The primary purpose would be to let Colonel Nasser realize that he cannot cooperate as he is doing with the Soviet Union and at the same time enjoy most-favored-nation treatment from the United States. We would want for the time being to avoid any open break which would throw Nasser irrevocably into a Soviet satellite status and we would want to leave Nasser a bridge back to good relations with the West if he so desires.[4]

The adjustments that Secretary of State Dulles eventually specified for President Dwight D. Eisenhower established a pattern that would be repeated whenever the United States sought to discipline Nasser: freeze economic aid to Egypt, extend support to Nasser's Arab rivals, and draw closer to Israel. Thus, in addition to withdrawing its offer to finance the Aswan High Dam, Washington halted PL–480 food shipments and other assistance in 1956. It also expressed greater public support for the Baghdad Pact (without actually joining it), as well as for the pro-Western governments of Sudan, Libya, Lebanon, and Jordan. Finally, although the United States continued to refrain from providing arms to Israel directly, it now encouraged other Western governments to do so.[5] As Dulles indicated, however, US officials did not want to back Nasser too far into a corner because they still held hope that he would become a cooperative ally. Hence they rejected repeated British invitations to join the Baghdad Pact. More significantly, they refused to back Britain and France in their ill-conceived collusion with Israel during the 1956 Suez crisis.

Eisenhower had begun musing about the need for an Arab counterweight to Nasser even before Suez. With Nasserist radicalism developing into an irresistible force that destabilized the governments of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq itself, Eisenhower referred to Nasser as "an evil influence" and argued the need "to build up an Arab rival . . . to capture the imagination of the Arab world."[6] After an early candidate, Saudi Arabia's King Sa'ud, proved deficient in the personal and ideological attributes necessary for such a role, however, US officials decided to take things into their own hands. In accordance with the Eisenhower Doctrine (enunciated in January 1957, the doctrine was a policy generally designed to halt Communist expansion in the Middle East, specifically to isolate and reduce Nasser's power), the new approach envisaged having a series of bilateral security arrangements with individual states rather than relying on one key ally to act as regional policeman. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq responded positively, and US officials concluded the next (and last) step was to bring Syria into line, thereby isolating Nasser and dashing his hopes of parlaying his influence into a negotiating chip with which to play Moscow and Washington off one another.

As described in more detail elsewhere in this book (see Chapter 5 by David Lesch), the American-Syrian crisis from August to October 1957 unleashed a storm of indignation in the Arab world, further tarnishing Washington's image and providing Moscow with a new opportunity to portray itself as the champion of Arab nationalism—and the Third World. As described by Lesch, Nasser also utilized the crisis to improve his position in Syria by sending in a modicum of troops to the Syrian port city of Latakia, ostensibly to protect the country. It was a brilliant stroke. Nasser's prestige and popularity as the nemesis of imperialism soared to new heights in Syria and throughout the Arab world. Additionally, the Soviet Union had gained so much sympathy in Syria during the preceding weeks that Nasser could credibly justify his intervention to the United States as the only way of dampening pro-Communist fervor there.[7]

Sure enough, a report prepared by the commander of US naval forces in the Mediterranean welcomed the Egyptian military landing in Latakia, viewing it as likely "to bolster Pan-Arabism and check Syrian drift into Soviet orbit." The report went on: "'If you can't lick them join them and Nasser probably better than any prospective replacement anyway."[8] There would be many more twists and turns in the US-Egyptian relationship, but the convergence of interests in Latakia set a precedent and strengthened those officials in Washington who wanted to abandon the attempt to find alternatives to Nasser.

THE UAR AND THE IRAQI COUP

Still, not everyone was convinced—certainly not John Foster Dulles. When Syria and Egypt announced their unification under the flag of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in January 1958, for example, Dulles interpreted it as a plot masterminded by Moscow. As he told an emergency session of the Baghdad Pact Council held in Ankara on January 28 and 29, the "union between Syria and Egypt would be dangerous to all our interests and if we remained passive it would expand and would shortly take in Jordan and Lebanon and ultimately Saudi Arabia and Iraq leaving us with a single Arab State ostensibly under Nasser but ultimately under Soviet control. It was clear that we ought to oppose such a union."[9]

It is instructive, however, that when Iraq's Hashemites—acutely aware of the mortal peril posed to them by the UAR—agitated for effective countermeasures, neither Britain nor the United States would hear of it. Iraq's Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah insisted to the British ambassador in late February that to save the monarchy it would be necessary to incorporate Kuwait into the hastily arranged "Arab Federation" of Iraq and Jordan—"both on economic grounds and because of the moral effect"—and "to bring over Syria, by the use of force if there was no other way."[10] Later, Iraqi prime minister Nuri Sa'id caused considerable alarm in London by drawing up a memorandum threatening to annex half of Kuwait's territory unless it immediately joined the Arab Federation, but to no avail.[11] Britain's ambassador assured his government that he was doing all he could to prevent the Iraqis "from taking any rash step over Syria or Kuwait," and John Foster Dulles fretted about "Nuri's recent intemperate statements."[12] But the matter became moot on July 14, 1958, when Iraqi military leaders overthrew the Iraqi government in a coup and slaughtered its Hashemite leadership.

In the final analysis, both Britain and the United States continued to view Hashemite pan-Arabism as a threat to their interests in the oil-producing shaykhdoms of the Arabian Peninsula. Even John Foster Dulles, paranoid as he was about the Communist "threat" in Syria and elsewhere, never allowed this concern to overshadow the greater strategic objective of maintaining US hegemony over the oil lanes. He put it to the National Security Council this way, in response to an earlier proposal that the United States might discreetly encourage the "ultimate union of Arab countries in the Arabian peninsula": "If the policy on the supply of oil from the Arab states to Western Europe were made uniform as a result of the unification of the Arab states, [the intervening portion of the quote is censored] the threat to the vital oil supply of Western Europe from the Near East would become critical."[13] Dulles added that he "was not saying that the State Department opposed moves in the direction of Arab unity; but the State Department wanted to be very careful that we did not end up by uniting the Arab states against the United States and the West."[14] In short, although Washington might have liked to see the Hashemites in Iraq and Jordan thwart Nasser's newly formed UAR, it would not allow them to do so at the cost of creating a new political entity that could potentially threaten the US protectorates in the Arabian Peninsula.

Nevertheless, 'Abd al-Karim Qasim's sudden Iraqi coup took Washington aback. CIA director Allen Dulles (the secretary's brother) told Eisenhower that "the hand of Nasser in these developments is very evident" and added that if the coup "succeeds, it seems almost inevitable that a chain reaction will set in which will doom the governments of Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran."[15] Accordingly, US troops landed in Lebanon to prop up the Christian Maronite government already besieged by pro-UAR rebels, and British forces arrived in Jordan to stabilize the situation there. Ten days after the Iraqi coup, John Foster Dulles was still arguing that "the real authority behind the Government of Iraq was being exercised by Nasser, and behind Nasser by the USSR."[16]

In fact, Qasim initially went out of his way to project a moderate stance: refusing to join the UAR; adopting a hostile stance toward Nasser; dropping all claims on Kuwait (whose emir was one of the first to congratulate him); and abiding by the fifty-fifty profit-sharing arrangement with foreign oil companies that the Hashemites had long been trying to overturn. As a result, when the new dictator managed to foil two Egyptian-backed plots to overthrow him in late 1958, he apparently did so with some assistance from Britain, which continued to view Nasser as the greater threat to its regional interests.[17] Qasim certainly appreciated the helping hand. According to Britain's ambassador: "He said he wanted to assure me that he wished friendship with Britain to stand fast and continued, with some emphasis, 'I will even say that not even friendship with any Arab country shall interfere with it.'"[18]

But the Americans reached a different conclusion than the British: Qasim's growing reliance on the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) in his struggle against his domestic opponents induced Washington to replace its hostility toward Nasser with a new phase of close cooperation.

ANTI-COMMUNIST COOPERATION AND NSC 5820/1

Evidence of Washington's renewed tilt toward Nasser could be found even before the Iraqi coup. Egypt's union with Syria and the ensuing wave of pan-Arab enthusiasm that swept the region greatly impressed US officials, prompting them to conclude that "Western interests will be served by placing US-UAR relations on a more normal basis" and to resume limited economic assistance to Egypt.[19] After Qasim's coup and his growing association with the ICP, however, the pro-Nasser chorus became deafening. US Information Agency director George Allen, for example, argued for a renewed alliance with Nasser even if it meant abandoning allies such as King Hussein: "We must adjust to the tide of Arab nationalism, and must do so before the hotheads get control in every country."[20] Eisenhower balked at Allen's more extreme suggestions, but even he mused, "Since we are about to get thrown out of the area, we might as well believe in Arab nationalism."[21]

Members of the Eisenhower administration were split on the extent to which it should accommodate Nasser. The Department of Defense and Department of the Treasury argued that Washington should merely "accept pan-Arab nationalism, of which Nasser is the symbol" and seek to normalize relations with him only as head of the UAR. But the State Department and the CIA—representing the majority opinion—wanted to go further, suggesting that the United States actively "accept and seek to work with radical pan-Arab nationalism," even to the extent of cooperating with Nasser on "certain area-wide problems."[22]

In the end the State Department and CIA's arguments prevailed, and the result was NSC 5820/1, a watershed National Security Council report dated November 4, 1958, that formed the basis of US Middle East policy for the next three years. It began by acknowledging that "the prevention of further Soviet penetration of the Near East and progress in solving Near Eastern problems depends on the degree to which the United States is able to work more closely with Arab nationalism."[23] Securing Washington's "primary objectives" in the region—foremost, the "denial of the area to Soviet domination," and secondarily, the "continued availability of sufficient Near Eastern oil to meet vital Western European requirements on reasonable terms"—required the United States to "deal with Nasser as head of the UAR on specific problems and issues, area-wide as well as local, affecting the UAR's legitimate interests."[24] And though NSC 5820/1 warned against accepting Nasser's hegemony over the entire Arab world, it also recognized that "too direct efforts on our part to stimulate developments lessening the predominant position of Nasser might be counter-productive."[25]

Nasser's regional rivals received short shrift in NSC 5820/1. US support for Saudi Arabia would remain intact, of course, but even there the report acknowledged the "reduced influence of King Saud" and called for strengthening "United States influence and understanding among groups in Saudi Arabia from which elements of leadership may emerge, particularly in the armed forces and the middle level Saudi Arabian Government officials."[26] As to Jordan, NSC 5820/1 had more drastic recommendations: "Recognizing that the indefinite continuance of Jordan's present political status has been rendered unrealistic by recent developments, [seek] to bring about peaceful evolution of Jordan's political status . . . including partition, absorption, or internal political realignment."[27] And though Washington continued to support the preservation of Israel "in its essentials, we believe that Israel's continued existence as a sovereign state depends on its willingness to become a finite and accepted part of the Near East nation-state system."[28]

NSC 5820/1 remained a controversial document, and both Defense and Treasury felt obliged to put their dissenting opinions on record. John Foster Dulles also continued to argue—against his own department—that it went too far in appeasing Nasser at the expense of more important allies such as Britain. But the secretary of state was dying of cancer and would soon leave office. As Qasim increasingly tied his fate to that of the Communists, fewer and fewer voices would be heard opposing the tilt toward the UAR.

EGYPTIAN OPPORTUNISM

Nasser's case was greatly helped by the reception accorded in Baghdad to William Rountree, the US assistant secretary of state, who visited the region in December 1958. Rountree endured volleys of rotten vegetables and trash thrown at his motorcade by angry Iraqi crowds only to receive a cool and perfunctory reception from Qasim himself. The shrewd Egyptians gave him a warmer welcome, and when he returned to Washington, Rountree reported that they were "showing a real concern over Communist penetration of the Middle East" and that "we can work with Nasser on the Iraqi situation."[29] The desk officer for Iraq at the State Department told Britain's ambassador after Rountree's trip that the "only hope for retrieving the situation now [seems?] to lie in the army acting under the inspiration of Arab nationalism of a pro-United Arab Republic and anti-Communist kind. This need not mean a takeover by the United Arab Republic."[30]

In fact, Nasser had been preparing the ground for a rapprochement with the United States for some time. He had already purged Bizri and his pro-Communist officers within weeks of the UAR's creation in an effort to earn the Syrian business community's trust, as well as to defuse the ideological challenge posed by communism to his brand of radicalism—a challenge that grew particularly acute after the coup in Iraq and the subsequent rise of ICP influence there. It was partly in order to nip this threat in the bud and partly to curry US favor that Nasser launched his anti-Communist campaign in earnest with a vitriolic speech in Port Sa'id on December 23, 1958. Many party members lost their lives during the days that followed, and hundreds more were thrown into prison. A second wave of arrests in March liquidated the Communists as a political force in the UAR altogether.

In Iraq, by contrast, the Communist advance seemed inexorable. The crushing of an Egyptian-backed revolt in Mosul in March 1959, followed by extensive purges of Arab nationalists, strengthened the ICP still further. As the party gained control of one professional association after another, as its armed militia grew to twenty-five thousand members by May 1959, and as it began to infiltrate the army itself, even Qasim started to worry. Every time he tried to rein in the Communists, however, a resurgence of Nasserist and Ba'thist opposition would force him to turn to them once again. Thus, a crackdown on the ICP after a particularly grisly outbreak of class warfare in Kirkuk in July 1959 ended in October after a Ba'thist attempt on the president's life.

British officials continued to insist that Qasim represented the best hope of preventing an all-out Communist takeover in Iraq and pointed to the strongly anti-Communist sentiments of senior military officers, but the Americans remained far less sanguine.[31] Mosul and the ICP's subsequent gains dispelled any remaining doubts about the reorientation outlined in NSC 5820/1 and led CIA director Allen Dulles to describe the Iraqi situation as "the most dangerous in the world today."[32] Another US official captured the mood of helpless frustration that gripped Washington during this period by observing that "we sit and watch unfolding events which seem to point inevitably to Soviet domination of Iraq, acknowledging, I am afraid, an inability to do anything about it. It is almost like watching a movie whose end we will not like but which we are committed to see."[33]

Nasser astutely fueled Washington's anxiety. He told reporters, for example, that he had "reliable information" of a Soviet master plot to create a "red fertile crescent"—a Communist federation encompassing Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Kuwait.[34] Only Egypt, he implied, blocked the path of this fiendish plan. Not surprisingly, relations with Moscow deteriorated. Three days after the collapse of the Mosul revolt, Soviet general secretary Nikita Khrushchev declared, "Nasser wants to annex Iraq. As I see it he is a hot-headed young man who has taken on more than he can manage." Nasser retaliated on March 20 by denouncing communism and accusing Khrushchev of "intervention in our affairs."[35]

Nasser's strategy paid off: the loss of Soviet support was more than offset by the advantages of a renewed alliance with Washington, where the initial trepidation concerning Nasser's role in Iraq gave way—much as it had in Syria in 1957—to a sense of enormous relief. An NSC report listed some of those advantages: $125 million in special assistance and surplus commodity sales in 1959; additional export guarantees and loans; US backing for a $56 million Egyptian loan request to the International Bank for Redevelopment and Development (the IBRD, or World Bank); and in "support of the UAR's anti-communist propaganda offensive . . . grant aid for the purchase of newsprint and . . . basic anti-communist material for use by UAR press and radio." Perhaps most important for Nasser, the report added: "Consistent with our recognition of the lack of any desirable alternatives for Syria's future and our understanding that continuance of the present trend in US-UAR relations will depend, in part, on our willingness to assist Nasser in his Syrian economic objectives, we have given special attention to DLF loan applications for the Syrian region."[36]

Both sides clearly understood the quid pro quo involved; it was spelled out by a State Department paper in mid-April 1959: "While we have not directly linked with Nasser's present campaign against communism the steps we have recently taken to aid Egypt, there is no doubt that Nasser knows that we have taken these steps as a sign of approval of his current campaign and that they have emboldened him in his anticommunist efforts."[37]

US RESERVATIONS

Washington's renewed affinity with Nasser alarmed those who resented the spread of his influence. Britain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel all felt that US support for Nasser's subversive campaign against Iraq was tilting the regional balance of power too far in his favor. Turkey had warned from the beginning that it would take military action if the Egyptians tried to bring Iraq into the UAR and made threatening moves along its southern borders both after the Mosul revolt in March 1959 and following the failed attempt on Qasim's life in October.

Saudi Arabia, already embarrassed by the revelation in March 1958 that King Sa'ud had financed an assassination plot against Nasser, also kept up steady pressure on Washington to do something about Nasser's growing influence in Arab politics. King Hussein of Jordan, for his part, tried to put himself forward as a viable alternative to Nasserism and communism in both Syria and Iraq.

But US officials, believing that King Hussein could not hope to compete with either Nasser or the Communists for the allegiance of the Arab masses, categorically refused to support his initiatives. As a State Department official told one of his British counterparts, "There could be no question of a Hashemite restoration either in Iraq or Syria."[38] Quite the contrary: the British embassy in Amman reported on April 24, 1959, that the US military attaché and his assistant had been "touting pro-Nasser views round the various offices" much to the consternation of the Jordanian government.[39] Not only did US officials oppose Hussein's revisionist pan-Arab ambitions, they even cautioned him against "provocative acts" directed at the UAR.[40] Hussein abandoned his efforts in August 1960 after a bomb placed by UAR operatives killed Prime Minister Hazza' al-Majali and ten other Jordanians in Amman.

US officials tried to allay the concerns of their other allies by assuring them that the UAR had no further expansionist ambitions and by pointing out that "Nasser's recent attacks on Communism had done more to stay the advance of Communism in the Middle East than anything the Western Powers could have achieved in years of work."[41] Still, it became evident even to Washington that the excessive reliance on Nasser was growing increasingly problematic: freed of almost all restraints, he was antagonizing his neighbors to the point where any one of them—Turkey, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, or Iraq itself—might lash out in a dangerously unpredictable fashion.

The dilemma confronting Washington was the same one it had faced since 1955: to find a credible anti-Communist movement that was not a mere vehicle for Egyptian expansionism. Some other version of radical pan-Arabism seemed the only answer, reflected in a conclusion suggested by Eisenhower in the aftermath of the Iraqi coup: "If we could somehow bring about a separation of Syria from Egypt and thereafter a union of Syria with Iraq, this might prove very useful."[42] Qasim, with his narrow popular base and his dependence on the ICP, would clearly not do. Neither would Hussein's Hashemite alternative, since Washington doubted it could work and feared the consequences for its hegemony in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf if it did.

THE SYRIAN SECESSION AND THE BREAKDOWN OF US-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS

Deliverance came on September 28, 1961, when a group of Syrian officers mounted a coup d'état and effected Syria's secession from the UAR. The implications of this devastating blow to Nasser's prestige for US-Egyptian relations were not lost on the foreign policy team of the newly elected president, John F. Kennedy. Robert Komer of the NSC observed just five days after the secession: "I am convinced that recent events may present us with the best opportunity since 1954 for a limited marriage of convenience with the guy who I think is still, and will remain, the Mister Big of the Arab World."[43]

During the winter of 1961–1962, Nasser's stock in Washington rose still further, bolstered largely by his diminished ability to provoke other US allies in the Middle East after Syria's secession, but also in part by the Kennedy administration's generally more tolerant attitude toward Third World radicalism. In practical terms this meant increased assistance for Egypt's now seriously ailing economy, including a three-year PL–480 agreement signed in 1962 for the sale of about $430 million worth of surplus foods. In return, Nasser agreed to maintain his anti-Communist stance and—as he put it in 1961 to the new US ambassador, John S. Badeau—to cooperate with the United States in keeping "the Israeli-Arab question 'in the icebox' while devoting themselves to the development of mutual interests."[44] As a result, Badeau could report at the onset of 1964 that "the United States now wields more influence in the Near East than it has at any time since 1955."[45] Yet even before Badeau penned those words, the US-Egyptian relationship had already begun the inexorable process of disintegration that would culminate when Nasser, in his desperation and folly, took a final, fatal step in 1967 that brought his world crashing down around him.

Exactly two months after Badeau's rosy assessment, Nasser complained to visiting US assistant secretary of state Phillip Talbot that "he could not accept . . . Talbot's presentation that U.S. Middle East policy had not changed since the death of President Kennedy."[46] One year later Nasser's envoy in Washington, Mustafa Kamel, also dated the downturn in bilateral relations to the transition from the Kennedy to the Lyndon B. Johnson administrations: "In late 1963, primarily as result of Yemen problem but possibly also as effect of US-Soviet détente, Kamel said Egyptians had sensed slow-down in US aid."[47]

The Egyptians were not imagining things, although the change in fact predated Kennedy's assassination. Its roots lay in the weakening of Nasser's regional influence following the Syrian secession. Whereas the events of 1958 convinced US officials that even the appearance of opposing Nasser would harm their fundamental interests, by 1962 the picture had changed dramatically. In Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Faisal—now the effective ruler—coupled domestic reform with a foreign policy that did not shrink as readily from confrontations with Nasser. Syria's secessionist regime, wobbly as it was, enjoyed good relations with the United States while trading bitter public invectives with Egypt. Qasim of Iraq, his economy in ruins, found himself bogged down in a Kurdish revolt that conveniently broke out just weeks after his ill-considered bid for Kuwait in June 1961 (which may have received some US backing). His relations with Nasser were, if anything, worse than those of the Saudis and Syrians. Even King Hussein of Jordan proved more resilient and durable than NSC 5820/1 had predicted, and now he too engaged in a spirited propaganda battle with the Egyptian leader. Nasser's isolation gave Washington leverage to diversify its regional assets by strengthening its ties with countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and, above all, Israel—all of which began receiving significantly increased levels of US military aid during the early 1960s. As Secretary of State Dean Rusk observed on August 7, 1962: "An extensive and intensive review of our policy toward Israel has been conducted in recent months. . . . The relatively high standing of the United States among the Arabs, while still fragile, provides us with a minor degree of maneuvering room in terms of adjustments in policy with respect to Israel."[48]

Twelve days later a presidential envoy informed Israeli leaders that Kennedy had approved Hawk missile sales to their country, initiating a process that would see US military assistance to Israel soar from $44.2 million in 1963 to $995.3 million by 1968.[49] Domestic political considerations undoubtedly played a role in this shift—both Kennedy and Johnson were far more sensitive to the pro-Israeli feelings of the US Jewish community than Eisenhower had been—but they cannot be understood in isolation from the strategic imperative: "to reinforce Israel as a counterweight to Nasser in case he misused or abused American assistance to him."[50] No wonder Nasser's high expectations in late 1961 regarding his new rapprochement with the United States gave way so quickly to disappointment.

As 1963 rolled by, moreover, Washington's "minor degree of maneuvering room" expanded considerably. Ba'thist coups in Iraq (February 8) and Syria (March 8) at last brought to power regimes that fit the US bill exactly: although radical and nationalist, they could be counted on to slaughter Communists efficiently while maintaining a hostile stance toward Nasser. There are indications that the United States played a role both in the overthrow of Qasim and in the subsequent hostility between the two Ba'thist regimes and Egypt. Jamal Atasi, one of the new cabinet ministers in Damascus, recalled what happened when the Syrian Ba'thists received reports about clandestine meetings between their Iraqi counterparts and CIA operatives in Kuwait:

> When we discovered this thing we began to argue with them. They would assert that their cooperation with the CIA and the US to overthrow 'Abd al-Karim Qasim and take over power—they would compare this to how

> Lenin arrived in a German train to carry out his revolution, saying they had arrived in a US train. But in reality—and even in the case of the takeover in Syria—there was a push from the West and in particular from the United States for the Ba'th to seize power and monopolize it and push away all the other elements and forces [i.e., both the Communists and the Nasserists].[51]

By mid-1963, then, Nasser had lost his indispensable status in US eyes. Even as the onset of détente and the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles reduced US fears about Soviet penetration of the Middle East generally, the rise of the Ba'th Party to power in Iraq and Syria liquidated any remaining danger of Communist takeovers in those countries. Nevertheless, Nasser remained leader of the most powerful state in the Arab world, and had he resigned himself to his diminished status, he might have continued to enjoy a constructive relationship with Washington. But Nasser could not do that. From the beginning his "statesmanship" had consisted of appealing to the vulgar enthusiasms of the mob by pulling off one spectacular public relations coup after another, each time by exploiting the blunders and misperceptions of others: Suez in 1956; Latakia in 1957; the UAR in 1958. Incapable of formulating more serious long-term policies for his country, Nasser now cast about for yet another quick fix to restore him to past glory.

ENDGAME

The years between 1963 and 1967 witnessed a series of foreign policy gambits by Nasser aimed at showing the United States that it could not take him for granted. All of them failed when US counterpressure forced him to retreat, but not before undermining his standing in Washington still further. Nasser's most fateful adventure was in Yemen, where his intervention in the civil war ultimately sucked in a third of his entire army and occasionally spilled over both into the British-controlled South Arabian Federation to the south and—more dangerously—north into Saudi Arabia in the form of bombing raids on royalist bases. These raids provoked extreme alarm in Riyadh and forced the US Air Force to carry out demonstration flights over Saudi towns in July 1963 as a show of support for the oil-rich kingdom's territorial integrity. Nasser had come perilously close to crossing the reddest of all US redlines in the Middle East. In addition, Nasser responded to Washington's arms sales to Israel by signing a military agreement of his own with Moscow in June 1963; by exerting pressure on Libya to expel US and British forces from Wheelus Air Base in early 1964; and by indulging in violent tirades against the United States. After a visit to Egypt by Soviet leader Khrushchev in May 1964, the pipeline from Washington shut down as US officials "simply allowed the Egyptian request for aid renewal to get lost in a maze of formalities without ever saying no to it."[52] Nasser's initial response was defiant. In a fiery speech on December 23, 1964, he praised the Soviet Union, announced his intention to continue arming rebels fighting US-Belgian "aggression" in the Congo, and concluded: "Whoever does not like our conduct can go drink up the sea. If the Mediterranean is not sufficient, there is the Red Sea, too."[53]

But as Egypt's deteriorating economy sparked protest demonstrations, illegal strikes, and even coup plots in late 1964 and 1965, Nasser realized he could not do without US aid. He therefore took steps to appease the United States, terminating his support for the Congo rebels, urging moderation in the Arab-Israeli dispute over the Jordan River waters, and toning down his anti-American rhetoric. Most important, he signed an agreement with King Faisal on August 24, 1965, that envisaged a total withdrawal of Egyptian troops from Yemen within thirteen months. PL–480 food shipments were resumed forthwith, albeit in reduced amounts and for shorter periods.

By mid-1966, however, Nasser—convinced now that the Americans were conspiring with the British and Saudis to bring him down—changed tacks yet again, drawing still closer to Moscow, hunkering down in Yemen, and resuming his propaganda offensive against the United States and its regional allies. Was he right? Probably as far as Britain and Saudi Arabia were concerned; the Saudis certainly seemed determined not to permit him an honorable exit from Yemen. But were the Americans also plotting his downfall? One background paper prepared for President Johnson in August 1966 suggests not:

> There are those—certainly the British and probably the Saudis—who think that any successor regime in Egypt would be better than the present one. This is dubious. Egypt's aspirations to lead the entire area go back many decades, if not centuries. They antedate Nasser and will not disappear with him. . . . If the Egyptians should decide to depose him that is their business. But there is no American interest in becoming a party to a plot or in letting the situation in Egypt degenerate into total instability in the hope that something better will turn up.[54]

In other words, the administration believed Nasser could be contained successfully through a policy of calculated sanctions and rewards. Others were not so sanguine. David Nes of the US embassy in Cairo warned that "we are moving inexorably toward a showdown in the area arising from this current attempt of our 'friends' to bring Nasser down and his largely defensive reactions. I agree with Bob Strong that even if we do no more than stand by and watch we shall be inextricably involved."[55]

In any case, US aid to Egypt dried up once again and Nasser retaliated in characteristic style—lambasting the United States as "leader of the imperialist camp," vowing to remain in Yemen "until the British-American-Saudi danger is completely removed," and threatening to resume bombing of Saudi border towns.[56] Nes in Cairo mused gloomily on May 11, 1967: "We seem to have driven Nasser to a degree of irrationality bordering on madness, fed, of course, by the frustrations and fears generated by his failures domestic and foreign. Our debate here revolves around where he will strike next—Libya, Lebanon?"[57] But Nasser, woefully underestimating the ferocity of Israel's determination to crush him and deluding himself that Washington still cared enough to rescue him from disaster, chose instead to roll the dice in Sinai, initiating a series of escalatory moves that led to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

CONCLUSION

John Foster Dulles once summarized Washington's attitude toward Arab nationalism by likening it to "an overflowing stream—you cannot stand in front of it and oppose it frontally, but you must try to keep it in bounds. We must try to prevent lasting damage to our interests in the Near East until events deflate the great Nasser hero myth."[58] And that is precisely what the Americans did. Despite some false steps, they ultimately succeeded in keeping Arab nationalism in bounds, and in doing so they achieved their two fundamental strategic objectives: maintaining control over the oil fields and denying the region to the Soviets. When Hashemite pan-Arabism threatened Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, Washington helped build up a counterweight in Cairo. When Nasser in turn got too big for his britches, Washington neutralized him by sanctioning the rise of the Ba'thists in Syria and Iraq and by letting Israel out of the icebox (where it had moved neither toward resolution of Arab issues nor toward war).

The competence of US Middle East policy during the period in question is often faulted. Eisenhower and Dulles in particular have been roundly criticized (including in this volume) for their clumsy covert operations and for their tendency to see Soviet plots everywhere. Some of this criticism is fair. But in most really crucial respects they were right: They were correct that a "Hashemite solution" in Syria in 1956–1958 would have been—from the standpoint of US hegemonic interests—a cure worse than the disease. Despite a little initial confusion, they did finally recognize that Nasser was a useful ally against the pro-Soviet bloc in Syria; there was a real Communist threat in Iraq after 1958; and given the popular mood of the time, Nasser was in fact the only viable counterweight.

Similarly, there is a long tradition of criticism that blames the breakdown in US-Egyptian relations during the early 1960s on the receptivity of Presidents Kennedy and (especially) Johnson to lobbying by domestic supporters of Israel. But this criticism erroneously assumes that the rationale for close US ties to Nasser—which existed under Eisenhower—continued to exist after 1961. This chapter has tried to show that it did not. Kennedy and Johnson were more responsive to their Jewish electorates largely because they could afford to be.

It made sense for the Americans to use Nasser so long as he was useful to them, just as it made sense for them to drop him when he outlived his usefulness. If there is blame to be assigned, it must fall squarely on Nasser's shoulders: it was he who failed to comprehend the magnitude of the change in his strategic relationship with the United States during the early 1960s; it was he who indulged in demagoguery and reckless foreign adventures rather than addressing the pressing problems confronting Egypt's society and economy; and it was he who chose to give the Israelis the excuse they needed to destroy him in 1967.

At the end of the day the Arab world remained divided, Saudi Arabia and the other oil-rich protectorates huddled safely under the US umbrella, and the Soviets were no closer to breaking Washington's regional hegemony. This may not have been the optimum solution for advocates of Arab nationalism, but by the standard of US national interests, it must be reckoned a great foreign policy success.

Notes

1. "The Political Union of Syria and Iraq," 25 April 1960. US Declassified Documents Reference System (Washington, DC: Carrollton Press, 1975), microfiche (hereinafter USDD) 1975:26H.

2. Wilbur Crane Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), 103.

3. Nasser wrote to Eisenhower on 6 February 1956 that "in the interest of peace Egypt recognizes the desirability of seeking to eliminate the tensions between the Arab States and Israel." USDD 1981:192C.

4. Memorandum from Dulles to Eisenhower, 28 March 1956, USDD 1989:001511.

5. Washington allowed France to divert NATO military equipment to Israel in the spring of 1956. Dulles also asked Canada to supply Israel with F-86 aircraft. Dulles telegram from Paris, 3 May 1956, USDD 1987:000714.

6. Eisenhower message to Dulles, 12 December 1956, USDD 1989:003548.

7. For more on Nasser's actions during the American-Syrian crisis, see David W. Lesch, "Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser and an Example of Diplomatic Acumen," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 2 (April 1995): 384–396.

8. Appendix to a memorandum by the chief of naval operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff on "Middle East Policy," 7 November 1957, USDD 1984:000135, 3096–3097.

9. Summary of Dulles's comments reported by British diplomat Sir J. Bowker in Ankara to the Foreign Office on 28 January 1958, British Foreign Office Documents (hereinafter BFOD), FO 371/134386/VY10316/10.

10. Report from Michael Wright in Baghdad on his conversation with Crown Prince 'Abd al-Ilah on 25 February 1958, BFOD, FO 371/134198/VQ1015/18.

11. See F. Hoyer Millar's Foreign Office Minute of 25 June 1958 on the talks with Nuri in London, BFOD, FO 371/134219/VQ1051/19.

12. Letter from Wright to London, 23 June 1958, BFOD, FO 371/134198/VQ1015/49; US Department of State, "Memorandum of Conversation," 15 June 1958, USDD 1981:371B.

13. Briefing note dated 21 January 1958 on the suggestions of the Planning Board of the National Security Council, USDD 1985:000640, 2.

14. Summary of the discussion at the 353rd meeting of the NSC, 30 January 1958, USDD 1990:000328, 8.

15. "Memorandum of Conference with the President," 14 July 1958, USDD 1993:002371.

16. Memorandum of the discussion at the 373rd meeting of the NSC, 25 July 1958, USDD 1990:000330, 3.

17. See, for example, the observation by Britain's ambassador in Ankara in early January 1959 that "we took certain action in favour of Qasim in regard to the recent plot in Iraq." BFOD, FO 371/140956/EQ1071/1.

18. Cable from Ambassador Wright in Baghdad to the British Foreign Office, 24 November 1958, BFOD, FO 371/133090/EQ1051/69.

19. "Background Paper" dated 9 June 1958 for Eisenhower's meeting with British prime minister Harold Macmillan, USDD 1988:001568. Among the steps taken to "normalize" US-UAR relations between January and July 1958: removal of export restrictions on civilian items such as aircraft spare parts; reinstitution of an "Exchange of Persons" program; and release of $400,000 (frozen since 1956) for road-building and communications equipment.

20. Summary of the 373rd NSC meeting on 24 July 1958, USDD 1990:000330, 6.

21. Summary of the 374th NSC meeting on 31 July 1958, USDD 1990:000331, 11.

22. "Briefing Notes" for the NSC meeting of 21 August 1958, USDD 1990:000352, 3; and 16 October 1958, USDD 1990:000332, 2.

23. "NSC 5820/1: U.S. Policy Toward the Near East," 4 November 1958, USDD 1980:386B, 2.

24. Ibid., 3, 10.

25. Ibid., 10.

26. Ibid., 11. Two years later, Sa'ud would be effectively overthrown by his more reformist brother, Faisal.

27. Ibid., 11–12.

28. Ibid., 9.

29. "Memorandum of Conference," 23 December 1958, USDD 1983:001435.

30. Cable from Ambassador H. Caccia in Washington to the Foreign Office, 18 December 1958, BFOD, FO 371/133086/EQ10345/7.

31. See, for example, Humphrey Trevelyan's report of 19 January 1960 to Selwyn Lloyd on the political situation in Iraq, BFOD, FO 371/149841/EQ1015/10.

32. Interview in the *New York Times,* 29 April 1959, quoted in Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 899.

33. Note by Gordon Gray, special assistant to the president for national security affairs, 1 April 1959, USDD 1984:000586.

34. Letter from Burrows to London, 23 May 1959, BFOD, FO 371/140957/EQ1071/28.

35. See Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 107.

36. Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) Report on the Near East, 3 February 1960, USDD 1984:002567, 6–7.

37. "The Situation in Iraq: Policy the United States Should Follow to Prevent Communism from Establishing Control of the Country," 15 [?] April 1959, USDD 1992:002638.

38. Letter from Burrows to London, 23 May 1959, BFOD, FO 371/140957/EQ1071/31.

39. Ibid., BFOD, FO 371/140957/EQ1071/28.

40. At least that is what Deputy Undersecretary of State Raymond Hare told Nasser in New York on 30 September 1960. USDD 1984:002451.

41. Ambassador Burrows's account of remarks made by a US State Department official to Turkish foreign minister Zorlu. Cable from Ankara to the Foreign Office on 23 May 1959, BFOD, FO 371/140957/EQ1071/31. Stuart Rockwell, director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern Affairs, explained his government's position to the British envoy by saying that "he did not think there was any serious danger of overt military intervention by the U.A.R. This being so he thought that it would be unwise to urge moderation on Nasser," since the United States did not wish to be seen as supporting communism against Arab nationalism. Cable from Ambassador Caccia in Washington to the Foreign Office, 19 March 1959, BFOD, FO 371/140937/EQ10316/96.

42. Memorandum of the discussion at the 383rd meeting of the NSC, 17 October 1958, USDD 1990:000332, 8.

43. Memorandum from Komer to McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow, USDD 1991:001643.

44. Badeau letter to President Johnson, 3 January 1964, USDD 1976:274C, 4.

45. Ibid., 3.

46. "Nasir's Comments on His Meeting with Assistant Secretary Talbot," CIA cable, 3 March 1964, USDD 1976:12B.

47. Outgoing State Department telegram dated 12 January 1965 summarizing a meeting between Kamel and Secretary of State Dean Rusk four days before, USDD 1982:002580.

48. “Review of United States Policy Toward Israel,” State Department memorandum to the president, 7 August 1962, USDD 1992:003242.

49. Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America’s Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 135.

50. Nadav Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 374.

51. Interviews conducted by author in Damascus, 22 July 1991.

52. Nadav Safran, *From War to War: The Arab-Israeli Confrontation, 1948–1967* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), 135.

53. Quoted in Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict,* 122.

54. “Current Status of U.S.-U.A.R. Relations,” 12 August 1966, USDD 1980:323B.

55. Letter from Nes to Rodger P. Davies at the State Department, 17 October 1966, USDD 1985:001635.

56. “Nasser’s May 2 Speech,” State Department memorandum, 4 May 1967, USDD 1993:001379.

57. Letter from Nes to Rodger P. Davies at the State Department, 11 May 1967, USDD 1985:002605.

58. Memorandum summarizing the discussion at the 374th National Security Council meeting on 31 July 1958, USDD 1990:000331, 7.

CHAPTER 7

THE SOVIET PERCEPTION OF THE US THREAT

Georgiy Mirsky

Throughout history, the official Soviet mentality was chronically one of a besieged fortress. *Capitalistic encirclement* was the key term, the implacable struggle of the two world systems was an axiom, the famous expression *kto kovo* (who will beat whom) both motto and leitmotif. And the imperialist monsters biding their time to attack and destroy the first country of the victorious proletariat changed names: first it was Britain and France, then Nazi Germany and Japan, then the United States. But the essence of the external imperialist threat remained the same, the mortal danger was always there, and the options facing the beleaguered Soviet people never varied: tough it out or perish.

Soviet citizens always felt they were unique, in more than one way. Even those who knew that life in the West was incomparably better and that the party propaganda praising the advantages of socialism was a huge fraud still believed that, given half a chance, the United States and its allies would attempt to crush the Soviet Union. Why? Because everybody was convinced that the Soviet Union—our country—was the biggest pain in the neck for world capitalism, the source of constant anger, fear, and irritation. By and large people did not question the necessity to maintain our armaments on the same level as the United States or to have allies and military footholds in diverse areas to counteract the US encirclement policy. This was why Moscow's activist policy in the Middle East never met with disapproval, inasmuch as it was regarded as a counterbalance to dangerous US expansion in that sensitive region. Discontent and irritation emerged later when one Arab-Israeli war after another demonstrated the incapacity of Soviet clients to effectively use the weaponry they had received from the USSR.

At this point, a question may be asked: Was it really so important for Kremlin rulers to take into account public opinion, considering the totalitarian nature of the regime? Certainly, political actions used to be taken without anybody in the Kremlin even thinking about the possible reaction of the people. However, a protracted pattern of political activity, as distinct from a single action, in a specific area had better be popular and easy to swallow by the masses. The point is that, unlike Stalin's rule, successor Kremlin regimes were based not so much on the *fuehrerprinzip* (principle of a single leader) as on the principle of collective leadership. It was an oligarchy ruling by consensus that was not confined solely to the Politburo but had to exist in lower party echelons as well. Signals that the "apparatchik aristocracy," the party, and management bosses were constantly sending to the very top might be vague, but still they could give a clue as to the prevailing opinions on specific issues inside the dominant class as a whole. And these opinions largely reflected the views and beliefs of much broader sections of the population, even of the masses, it may be said. For, contrary to the concepts of some Sovietologists, the Soviet state, inhuman and antihuman as it was, could still be called the "people's state" in the sense that there was a close affinity between the ideas, views, and cultural and social tastes of the rulers and the ruled. Soviet propagandists were not far from the truth when they claimed that they were representatives of the people who were in charge in the Soviet Union. However, all of this was being done not on behalf of some closed and privileged stratum, as had been the case in prerevolutionary Russia, but on behalf of those sons of peasants and workers who had made it to the top. Thus, the Soviet elite was never socially and culturally alienated or even differentiated from the bulk of the population. The big shots and the masses basically shared the same mentality.

This helps to explain why it was important for any long-term political strategy to meet with the approval, if not the actual backing, of the people. Popular tastes, traditions, and prejudices, in their turn, could be used by policymakers for the rationalization of their line. The Middle East was a perfect example of convergence of popular beliefs—crude and false but mostly genuine—and the Kremlin's realpolitik. A widespread apprehension of US aggressive designs coupled with anti-Semitism (since the US ally, partner, and "vanguard striking force" in the Middle East happened to be a Jewish state, distasteful almost by definition to quite a few Russians, Ukrainians, and others) helped to ensure solid popular backing for an activist and militant anti-American line of Soviet policy in the Middle East. In practice, of course, it was translated into a strategic alliance with left-wing Arab regimes against the US-Israel axis.

What were the motives of the Soviet leadership in the confrontation with the United States in the Middle East? Here, too, we must take as a starting point the overall Soviet concept of the global struggle between socialism and capitalism.

Some Western authors seem to have overestimated the importance of ideology to Soviet foreign policy, believing that it was paramount in determining the Kremlin's actions. Others, on the contrary, tend to focus almost exclusively on geopolitics. In fact it was a combination of both. There is no doubt that such people as Nikita

Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Andrei Gromyko, Mikhail Suslov, and the rest sincerely believed in the inherent superiority of socialism and its ultimate victory over capitalism on the global scale, but at the same time they realized that it was highly improbable for them to actually see the great triumph of Marxism-Leninism in their lifetimes. It was necessary for them to create conditions for this triumph—that is, to strengthen by all means the forces of world socialism and to weaken the imperialist enemy. To achieve this, it was imperative for the Kremlin leaders to change the global balance of forces, foremost in the political and military spheres, since they already lost faith in socialism's ability to achieve greater productivity of labor (in accordance with Lenin's concept). It was, of course, Lenin who predicted that it would be precisely in the sphere of productivity that socialism would eventually prove superior to capitalism. As early as the 1960s it was already impossible to seriously believe in such an eventuality given the obvious and growing gap between the economies of the two world systems. Thus, stress had to be placed on the undermining and sapping of the imperialist forces in the noneconomic sphere since the economy increasingly looked like the Achilles' heel of socialism. The adversary had to be defeated on a different battlefield, and it was clear that it was first in the sphere of military power and second in the ability to appeal to anticolonial, anti-Western sentiments of Third World nations that socialism could really have an edge over capitalism.

In terms of military power, the Kremlin had to be very cautious about using it, especially after the Cuban missile crisis demonstrated the limits of brinkmanship. A world war was tacitly acknowledged to be suicidal, although the top military brass was reluctant to admit it. The awesome military might of the Soviet Union was to be used in three dimensions: first, as a reminder to Western Europe that tens of thousands of Soviet tanks were ready to roll in should the imperialists try to stage a counterrevolution in the socialist camp; second, as a counterbalance to US sea power (this was why so much emphasis was laid on the expansion of the Soviet Navy); and third, as a means of arming Soviet allies in the Third World.

The prospects of spreading Soviet influence in the Third World, of transforming the national liberation movement into a strategic ally against the West, were brighter. Broadly speaking, this was the picture: to strike a military blow at the citadel of world capitalism was too dangerous due to the inevitable nuclear disaster it would entail; internal contradictions of capitalism were growing but the results were too slow in coming; the situation in Europe was frozen, forces on both sides engaged in trench warfare with no prospect of a breakthrough in either direction; the developing countries seething with discontent and driven by the dynamics of anticolonial inertia presented an excellent opportunity of undermining the imperialist system from within rather than engaging it in a frontal clash.

Finally, it must be said that if this kind of global thinking existed in the minds of the top leaders, this was not the case with the people down the road, with those who were planning and implementing the actual policy. For them, it was a given: the Cold War was on, the United States was the enemy, everything had to be done to weaken it. It was a zero-sum game not necessarily motivated by ideological hatred and intransigence. The Communist commitment of the diplomats and the scholars in think tanks was actually skin-deep, as evidenced by the subsequent transformation of many of those people in the post–Mikhail Gorbachev era: they have quietly forgotten their Marxism and perfectly adapted to the new situation.

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE ERAS OF KHRUSHCHEV AND BREZHNEV

If, during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras (1953 to 1982), you asked any young Soviet diplomat just out of the Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) about the significance of the Middle East for the USSR, he would answer matter-of-factly: too vital to yield even an inch to the Americans. If you had pressed him for specifics, he would have mentioned the geostrategic dimension first, oil second, and the necessity to back our allies—the Arab anti-imperialist forces—third.

Upon closer look, however, all three dimensions would prove to be not so terribly vital to the interests of the Soviet Union. From the geopolitical and strategic point of view, nobody in his right mind could imagine US tanks rolling across the Arab deserts to the Caucasus in a new world war. In the "ICBM era" the value of any piece of territory was greatly reduced anyway. As to oil, the USSR had plenty of it to begin with; any attempt to deprive the US allies of Middle East oil would have been extremely dangerous since it was clear that the West would not hesitate to protect its access to that commodity with military force. The only thing left, therefore, was the USSR's strategic alliance with the left-wing Arab regimes.

This alliance was born under Nikita Khrushchev, who, in 1955, struck the famous arms deal with Egyptian president Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser. At the time, Khrushchev overruled the objections of the Soviet ambassador to Egypt, who was dismayed by the very idea of dealing with such a patently non-Communist and politically doubtful character as Nasser. Khrushchev was not inhibited by Marxist dogmatic puritanism. He regarded Nasser and his like as valuable partners in the anti-imperialist struggle. It was a bold and imaginative pattern; fabulous opportunities seemed to be in the offing.

From then on, the new alliance rapidly gained momentum. It expanded to involve Syria, Iraq, and Algeria, and, later, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and South Yemen. For a brief moment it seemed that Sudan, too, joined the "progressive camp"; Libya always was an embarrassing partner, but Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi's anti-imperialism appeared on balance to be more important than his bizarre theories, which were clearly incompatible not only with Marxism but also with the "revolutionary-democratic ideology" shared by Nasserists and Ba'thists. This anecdote was typical of the Soviet Union's attitude toward Qaddafi: Sometime in the 1970s, after one of his particularly vicious anti-Communist outbursts, it was decided that a reply to Qaddafi would be published—not in *Pravda,* of course, but in the *Literary Gazette,* and a high-ranking official in the Central Committee's International Department was entrusted with this job. At the last moment, however, the article, which sounded very lucid and convincing to me, was taken out of the newspaper; apparently somebody higher up in the hierarchy decided that it was not worthwhile annoying the erratic colonel.

Pertaining to ideology, a couple of observations might not be out of place. Khrushchev's new course of aligning Moscow with Nasser-type leadership was, of course, a purely pragmatic matter devoid of any ideological overtones. But in a socialist state it had to be rationalized and explained in terms of Marxist theory. This was when academic scholars, myself included, were called upon to work out a plausible theory aimed at proving in a convincing manner exactly why it was not only possible but necessary and highly helpful for the Great Cause to establish an alliance with such people as Nasser. The concept we elaborated was that of "Revolutionary Democracy," a non-Marxist, nonproletarian set of ideas and politics founded first on anticolonialism and second on the alleged impossibility of resolving the urgent problems of the developing countries on the basis of capitalism. The idea was that, although anti-imperialist nationalists were not ready to acknowledge and adopt Marxism's eternal truth, the logic of life would sooner or later teach them that only by following the socialist path could they hope to overcome their countries' backwardness and dependence on imperialism. Thus, the anticolonial, anti-imperialist revolution would inevitably grow into a social one, directed against both foreign and domestic oppressors. The national liberation movement would be transformed into a national-democratic revolution with a clear anticapitalist content and, later, into a popular-democratic revolution of a distinct socialist orientation.

Key to this concept were the terms "noncapitalist development" and "socialist orientation." It was assumed that someday Nasser and his ilk would realize the futility of their hopes to modernize their countries and to build an industrial society within the framework of the world capitalist system with the help of the domestic bourgeoisie. Then, socialism would come naturally to them as the only way out of the horrible mess left behind by the imperialist exploiters.

Moreover, these theoretical constructions had very little to do with a genuine desire to build a happy socialist society in the Third World countries. I am not referring to the beliefs and motivations of the scholars who were busy writing memos, papers, and monographs on the issue, but rather to the actual policymakers, who were indifferent to the results of "noncapitalist development" in Asia and Africa. What mattered, for them, was the involvement of the states ruled by the "revolutionary democrats" in a worldwide anti-Western coalition. Ideology for them was secondary; it was just instrumental in bringing about decisive change in the correlation of world forces. The Third World leaders who proclaimed their allegiance to socialism, even if only of a homemade and not Marxist variety, were ipso facto committed to the Soviet Union and the socialist community in the international arena. Just how successful they were in regard to the socialist transformation of their states was largely irrelevant. The main thing was to get into the "soft underbelly" of the capitalist system—Asia, Africa, and Latin America—and eventually besiege imperialism in its citadel. The more Third World countries proclaimed socialism as their goal, and thus became hostage to Soviet political support, arms deliveries, and so on, the better. Each of these countries could, from that moment on, be regarded as a loss to the United States and its allies: it was a zero-sum game. The propaganda aspect was important, too. Certainly what mattered for Brezhnev was being able to say in his report at the next party congress, “Comrades, the period under review has demonstrated once more that ideas of socialism are on the march throughout the globe; more countries now stand under the banner of socialism.”

In regard to practical politics in the Middle East, the Kremlin’s strategy was aimed at ensuring a position of strength for the Arab allies in their confrontation with Israel, which was seen as America’s stooge. Disappointment and bitterness set in each time the Arab forces were defeated by Israel; over and over again, an escalation in arms deliveries followed. The more the USSR became committed to the protection of its Arab allies, the more it had to up the ante or else prepare to lose face.

At the same time, there is no evidence that Moscow ever wanted to escalate the Arab-Israeli confrontation to the point of large-scale war. First, Soviet leaders feared that Arab armies would be soundly beaten; second, they were apprehensive about the war spilling over into a US-Soviet armed conflict, signaling the outbreak of a nuclear world war. I happened to witness twice the worry and upset of high-ranking Soviet officials as Israeli forces seemed on the verge of closing in on Cairo and Damascus in 1967 and 1973. The PLO, too, was to be supported inasmuch as it represented a nuisance in harassing Israel, but it was never regarded as a liberation army built up to recapture Palestine or even a part of it.

The official Soviet position, of course, was in accordance with UN Resolution 242. In the International Department of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, which was the place where policy guidelines were usually outlined (this also occurred in various academic institutions), debates took place from time to time over goals in the Middle East. The main issue was whether it would serve our interests if Resolution 242 was implemented and a Palestinian entity created. Opinions differed sharply, some people feeling that the Arabs would no longer need our military backing and that Moscow would lose its leverage.

GORBACHEV, PERESTROIKA, AND NEW POLITICAL THINKING

At first, Gorbachev’s foreign policy course was quite traditional, which is not surprising given his background as a career Soviet apparatchik. Even when he embarked on a course of far-reaching domestic reforms, the habitually tough anti-imperialist line showed no signs of slackening. The perestroika leaders, breaking new ground at home, were anxious to cover their flank in the forum of foreign policy. They felt they could not advance on two fronts simultaneously, and they were afraid of being perceived as soft on imperialism. So Gorbachev and Shevardnadze preferred to be seen as strong and tough vis-à-vis the West; accordingly, Soviet Middle East policy remained for a time basically unchanged.[1]

Things began to move with the advent of the “new political thinking,” particularly when “de-ideologization” of foreign policy was announced. This entailed a decline of ideological priorities and “socialist” commitments abroad. I remember speaking at a conference convened by Shevardnadze in 1987, with all of the Soviet ambassadors abroad participating. When I professed my disillusionment with the practical results of the "socialist orientation" in the Third World, it was a shock to many. However, a group of our ambassadors in the African states approached me after my talk and hastened to thank me for my outspokenness. "At last, somebody has told the truth," they said. "We knew all along that this socialist orientation was a fraud and a failure but, of course, in our official reports things just had to look quite different."

Inevitably, reappraisal of the Soviet Union's long-standing line in the Middle East was due to come. More and more, scholars and journalists began questioning the very foundations of our policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Doubts were expressed as to the wisdom of our 1967 decision to break off diplomatic relations with Israel. A new approach was shaping up with regard to the Camp David Accords.

It is well known that opposition to Camp David and bitter denunciation of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat's political line were the cornerstones of Soviet policy in the Middle East in the 1980s.[2] Much later, in the days of perestroika, I ventured an opinion that it was high time Egypt was readmitted into the family of Arab states. Immediately, a prominent party official with an Arabist background retorted: "Well, and how about the slogan, 'Bury Camp David'?" In spite of the utter absurdity of this position, the official stand on Camp David remained steadfast during the first perestroika years. But this, too, began to change as glasnost gained strength.

Some authors, Western as well as Russian, seemed to underestimate the role of the ideological factor and, correspondingly, of glasnost in the demise of Communist rule. As the ideological barriers were crumbling, suddenly it became possible to question the Soviet past as a whole. When Gorbachev finally, albeit reluctantly, gave the green light to de-Stalinization, little did he think that very soon it would turn into de-Leninization and de-bolshevization. Then, an end to the Cold War and to the confrontation era was announced. Almost overnight, the United States ceased to be an enemy; the very word *imperialism* disappeared from the newspapers. The party apparatus suddenly realized that the bottom line was not there anymore, the cornerstone fell out, the raison d'être of the system having vanished. This partly explains why the resistance to the overthrow of the Communist regime in the aftermath of the August coup was so feeble: the heart was no longer there; the ideological commitment was gone.

Even before the final collapse, there was a sea change in foreign policy. Anti-imperialism as a guideline disappeared; promoting socialism worldwide became a futile task. Diplomatic relations with Israel had to be restored. De-ideologization meant that our relations with the Arab world were no longer dictated by the commitment to leftist Arab regimes and the need to deny the United States the dominant role in the area. Since the United States was not an enemy anymore, why bother about Israel as an enemy foothold?

When the Gulf crisis erupted with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Soviet Union for the first time sided with the United States in a confrontation with a Third World country—and a socialist-oriented country at that. Some took it very hard. When I spoke at the Academy of the Warsaw Treaty Organization in Moscow at the height of the crisis, I bluntly told my audience that, in my opinion, Saddam Hussein was a gangster and a butcher. There was an uproar and angry exclamations, and some colonels even walked out. These were the kind of people who had arrived by the hundreds to attend the recent reception at the Iraqi embassy in Moscow to celebrate the 1958 Iraqi revolution. For them, Saddam was a hero, an anti-American, anti-Jewish, antidemocratic, tough, no-nonsense leader. In short, he was their kind of man.

Faced by strong opposition to his allegedly pro-US policy, Gorbachev tried, for the last time, to play a relatively autonomous role. Middle East adviser Yevgeny Primakov was sent to Baghdad to lobby for a compromise solution. Had he succeeded, it would have been a serious boost to Gorbachev's prestige. First, it would have placated the Russian "patriots" unhappy with what they perceived as Gorbachev's subservience to Bush. Second, it could have assuaged the Arabs, who by that time were mad at Gorbachev over the issue of Jewish immigration to Israel. Soviet ambassadors in Arab capitals were reporting to the Kremlin that Soviet prestige in the Arab world was at an all-time low. Arabs felt that Gorbachev (much loved by Bush) could, if he wished, have persuaded the US president to channel the bulk of the Soviet Jews to the United States rather than to Israel. If Gorbachev was not even trying to do this, it could only mean that he did not care about Arabs at all.

Gorbachev, of course, knew that he could not do any such thing. The only way to restore, if only partially, Soviet prestige in the Arab world was to save Iraq from imminent disaster. But Primakov's mission was doomed from the beginning. Later Primakov told me that, given three more days, he would have persuaded Tariq 'Aziz and thus Saddam Hussein to make concessions that would have prevented the US ground offensive. The question arises: Just who did Primakov think he was that the US president would give him three days when everything was already decided and D-Day had already been fixed?

At the subsequent Madrid conference the Soviet Union tried to posture as an independent actor, but nobody took it seriously; the USSR was no longer a superpower. Paradoxically, it was Bush who tried to place the Soviet Union on a superpower basis for the last time. In fact, his "new world order" envisaged a situation in which both superpowers would continue playing a dominant role in world affairs, but in cooperation and not in confrontation. Gorbachev would undoubtedly have gone along with that, but it was too late. The hands on the clock were nearing midnight.

CONCLUSION: POST-COMMUNIST RUSSIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Largely because of Russia's continued power inferiority in the post–Cold War era in comparison to the United States, only the Middle East offers Russia the chance to play a role in world affairs outside its immediate border countries. In the Middle East, Russia has commitments, political and military investments, allies, and leverage of sorts. Like the United States, Russia wields some influence, although to a far lesser degree, in both the Arab world and in Israel. Russian diplomats sit at international conferences on the Middle East, appearing on equal footing with the United States. During Barack Obama's presidency, Russia also deepened its alliance commitments and augmented its military presence in the region through its extensive support of Iran and the Bashar al-Asad government during the Syrian civil war.

Perception is what largely matters to the Russian people regarding their country's foreign policies, not substance. As former US speaker of the house Tip O'Neill once said, all politics is local. For any government in Moscow, it is vital to be seen by the people as not neglecting Russian national interests abroad, as pursuing an independent foreign policy worthy of a great power. And it is in the Middle East alone that Russia has a tradition of diplomatic success.

Notes

1. Information for this point was obtained in conversations the author conducted with Alexander Yakovlev, a top adviser for Gorbachev.

2. Probably the best scholarly expression of Soviet anger and frustration is Yevgeny Primakov's book on Sadat, entitled *Story of Betrayal.*

CHAPTER 8

THE SUPERPOWERS AND THE COLD WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Rashid Khalidi

THE INCEPTION OF THE COLD WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Precisely when the Cold War began is subject to some dispute.[1] Winston Churchill's March 5, 1946, speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, declaring that "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an *iron curtain* has descended across the Continent," is often seen as indicating that the Cold War was already under way by that point.[2] We now know that even earlier, at the height of the colossal joint effort against Nazi Germany during World War II, the Cold War rivalry was already presaged by deep suspicions among the wartime allies.

This was especially the case with those old adversaries Churchill and Stalin, whose antagonism to each other's system was long-standing.[3] From a very early stage in the Cold War, the rivalry of the Soviets and the Western powers was notable in the Middle East and the adjacent regions south of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), whence Britain had launched its repeated interventions to crush the Bolshevik regime during the four-year Russian civil war after the 1917 revolution. It is unlikely that either Churchill or Stalin, who were central figures in this earliest phase of the East-West rivalry, ever fully forgot the impact of this deadly struggle. Churchill's entire career shows that he was always profoundly concerned about Communism in the Middle East, while Stalin's long-standing obsession with Britain as an imperialist power in the Middle East at times seemed to eclipse his concerns about the growing US role there. American policymakers, less experienced internationally than their British counterparts, often tended to be influenced by the latter's concerns about the spread of Communism in the Middle East.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the first non-European confrontations between the USSR and the United States and its allies transpired in the Middle East. Much historical work has been done on the origins of the Cold War.[4] However, there has been less new research about the central role of this great international rivalry in a number of regional conflicts.[5] This is as true of the Middle East as it is of other areas that felt the impact of the Cold War rivalry from the 1940s until the 1990s.[6] These regions have been haunted since then by the ghosts of the Cold War. The most striking example is the blowback from US involvement in the Afghan war against the Soviet occupation of that country in the 1980s.[7]

Immediately after its Soviet rival disappeared in 1990–1991, the United States confidently asserted its unrivaled power in the Middle East by leading a coalition against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in the first Gulf War and by convening the 1991 Arab-Israeli peace conference in Madrid. The former was the first American land war in Asia since Vietnam. The negotiations that began at Madrid constituted the only serious and sustained international effort at a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict involving all parties since the 1939 St. James Palace Conference. In light of these apparently radical departures in American policy in the Middle East immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it would be useful to revise our understanding of the Cold War as simply a prolegomenon to what some have described as a subsequent era of unfettered American dominance over the region. Such a revision would help us to answer at least two questions: Was the United States previously as constrained by the presence of its Soviet rival as it sometimes seemed—and as these two novel departures immediately after the demise of the USSR seemed to indicate? Alternatively, was America in fact more dominant in the Middle East throughout the Cold War era than may have been evident at the time?

These are important questions, since for the United States the Cold War was the ostensible reason for a vastly expanded American post–World War II global presence. Similarly, the perceived Soviet threat was the pretext for the establishment of US military bases spanning the globe and for the development of a vastly enhanced American international intelligence, economic, and diplomatic profile compared to America's relatively modest role in the world before December 7, 1941. In many regions, this expansion of America's global reach meant that the wartime arrival of US troops—in terms of the Middle East, this occurred in North Africa and Iran in 1942—was not followed after the end of the war by their disappearance back over the horizon, as had happened in Europe after World War I. These initial wartime deployments of American forces, and the later establishment and postwar maintenance of major US air bases in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Morocco, and Turkey, marked the beginning of an ongoing US military presence in different locales that continued for many subsequent decades. From this perspective, it appears that these early wartime and postwar moves constituted the beginning of an American role as *the* major Middle

Eastern power, a reality that was masked for a time by the power and regional proximity of the USSR.

Although overshadowed at times by other Cold War arenas, the Middle East was not just a secondary region where the United States and the USSR contended. Already during World War II, the crucial strategic importance of the Middle East had been amply demonstrated in terms of its central geographic location on the southern flank of Europe astride vital sea and air lanes and the vast energy reserves it was known to contain. The region's importance in terms of strategy and oil was further established during the Cold War. This importance has been demonstrated again since the Cold War ended, as evidenced by a series of major recent American initiatives in the region, including the 1991 Gulf War, the 1991–1993 Madrid-Oslo Middle East peace process, the Iraq sanctions regime from 1991 until 2003, and the invasion of that country in 2003 and its subsequent occupation. These initiatives in the Middle East were among the most dramatic actions taken by the United States in the world arena since the end of the Cold War.

THE AMERICAN-SAUDI AXIS

It is useful to start any assessment of the onset of the Cold War in the Middle East with the meeting between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Saudi king Abdul Aziz al-Saud in Egypt on February 12, 1945. Roosevelt, infirm and only two months away from his death, was on his way home from the Yalta conference. Why did the weary president of the most powerful country on earth spend the better part of a day meeting with this apparently minor Middle Eastern potentate? Because of Saudi Arabia's importance in the eyes of those who were already planning for the postwar era. We know that by this point the vast extent of Saudi oil reserves was familiar to American strategic planners and oil executives.[8] Saudi oil had just begun flowing to support the Allied war effort, which was simultaneously strangling both German and Japanese oil supplies, measurably shortening the war. Finally, in 1945 the United States was already planning to acquire a major air base at Dhahran, which it continued using until 1962 and used again for a decade starting with the 1991 Gulf War.[9]

By this stage, the United States and Britain had launched invasions of Sicily, Italy, and southern France from bases in the Middle East and were supplying massive quantities of lend-lease equipment to the Soviet Union across Iran, which was occupied by British, Soviet, and American troops. Saudi Arabia was only one link in this vast wartime chain, which stretched around the globe, but the kingdom had one crucial characteristic, besides its strategic position and its possession of vast reservoirs of petrochemicals beneath its soil: it was one of only two independent states in this crucial Middle Eastern region that had never been occupied by the troops of European colonial powers and had no foreign bases on its soil. Moreover, Ibn Saud had twelve years earlier signed an exclusive agreement for the exploration and exploitation of its oil reserves with an American consortium of companies that became the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco). This consortium had thereby secured the first major exclusive American oil concession in the Middle East, heretofore an almost exclusive British and French preserve.

President Roosevelt was thus meeting with the absolute ruler of a nation with something unique to offer the United States: an alliance with a Middle Eastern power that was not already part of another great power's sphere of influence. This gave American access to oil and bases in the kingdom even more meaning. Moreover, importantly for the coming postwar era, Saudi Arabia's ruler was staunchly anti-Communist. In addition, he did not have to worry about a large body of nationalist public opinion, unlike governments in other major Middle East countries like Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, where large urban populations—organized into political parties, enjoying slowly growing literacy, and attached to a culture of newspapers and books—were deeply anticolonial and suspicious of foreign bases and foreign concessions.

Nevertheless, because of his concerns about his standing in the Arab world and available public opinion in his kingdom, the Saudi king felt unable to go along with the request of his American interlocutor that all the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust be settled in Palestine. He stressed that, happy though he was to cooperate with the United States, he insisted on the importance of one issue—Palestine—about which he said: "What injury have Arabs done to the Jews of Europe?"[10] In response, in April 1945, just before Roosevelt died, the president sent a letter to Ibn Saud confirming what he had told him in response to the concerns over Palestine he had expressed during their meeting: that the United States would consult with both Arabs and Jews before acting in Palestine, where it would never act against Arab interests.[11]

Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, initially denied that the United States had ever made such commitments.[12] Although he was later provided with Roosevelt's April 1945 letter by the State Department, Truman's Palestine policy, crafted over the next few years, violated both of his predecessor's commitments—to consult with both Arabs and Jews before taking action over Palestine and to do nothing there that would harm the Arabs. Four American diplomats based in the Middle East who had been brought back to Washington in October 1945 to brief the new president were left cooling their heels for over a month because, Truman finally told them, his advisers "felt that it would be impolitic to see his Ministers to Arab countries, no matter how briefly, prior to the November . . . elections." It was to this group that Truman uttered the infamous words: "I'm sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."[13] It is not surprising, given these views, that starting with Truman's presidency, the issue of Palestine became a continuing irritant to the Saudi monarchy in its dealings with Washington, and it has remained so for many years. It has, however, been an irritant that most Saudi and other Arab leaders came to accept as the price of doing business with the indispensable power of the United States.

By giving an oil concession to an American consortium in 1933, the Saudi monarch had already managed to assert his independence from Great Britain's heretofore exclusive influence over his kingdom, which the king had long resented bitterly.[14] Whether farsighted, fortunate, or both, between 1933 and his meeting with Roosevelt, Ibn Saud managed to link his dynasty firmly to the growing power of the United States, well before many other world statesmen realized the future superpower's full potential. In the end, this crucial connection was to prove more important to him and to his six sons who succeeded him as kings after 1953 than were their concerns about Palestine.

Washington early on perceived Saudi Arabia's economic and strategic value to postwar planning. Beyond this, it soon turned out to have the world's largest proven oil reserves. Oil produced by Aramco was crucial to Europe's postwar recovery, to keeping oil prices extremely low for several decades after World War II, and to increasing the profits of the big American oil companies that dominated the world oil market. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries in the Middle East where the United States was free to establish bases without having to get permission from, or incur the jealousy of, the traditional powers that dominated the region—Britain and France.[15] The Dhahran air base was particularly useful for American global airlift capabilities and for rescue, reconnaissance, and combat aircraft, as a link in the chain of bases strategically located along the Soviet southern frontiers. This was particularly the case in the early years of the Cold War, when American strategic bombers such as the B-29 had a limited range.[16] Feeling pressure from Arab nationalist sentiment and the anticolonial propaganda of the Egyptian regime, which intensified in the late 1950s, the Saudi government requested termination of the basing arrangement in 1961, and the US Air Force ceased to base units there the subsequent year, although American contract personnel continued to run the airfield for the Saudi government. The US Air Force ceased to need the base in the early 1960s, when the development of longer-range weapons systems made it possible to give up several American bases, including Dhahran and later Wheelus Field in Libya.

However, starting in 1991, after the advent of a completely different post–Cold War American strategy, one involving a large-scale, long-term, multicountry American military presence in the Middle East, US forces were once again based at Dhahran, as well as in Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and elsewhere in the region. This new strategy came after the demise of the USSR, which removed any existential nuclear danger to the United States itself. However, these newly arrived American forces in the Middle East were not directed against "international communism" and its proxies, as was the case from the mid-1940s through the early 1990s, but rather against local Middle Eastern actors—an entirely different purpose than that for which an earlier generation of US bases in this region was first envisioned.

THE ARAB COLD WAR

As the Cold War penetrated the Middle East and as the United States gradually replaced Britain and France as the dominant Western power in the region, the US-Saudi connection continued to be important. It was cemented in 1957 by the new Saudi monarch, King Saud's, adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine.[17] This follow-up to the Truman Doctrine—which ten years earlier had marked the first formal American recognition that the Cold War had extended to the Middle East—was enunciated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower before a joint session of Congress in January 1957. In it Eisenhower proclaimed American support for any Middle Eastern government targeted by "overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism."[18] King Saud's public adhesion to the

American camp in the Middle East through his acceptance of this doctrine was a major coup for the United States. American policy thereby separated Saudi Arabia from Egypt, its erstwhile ally in inter-Arab politics and a vocal advocate of nonalignment, as the Egyptian regime of Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser gradually moved closer to the Soviet Union.

For the next decade, Saudi Arabia and Egypt constituted the main poles of two opposed camps within the Arab world, engaged in what Malcolm Kerr described as the "Arab cold war."[19] These camps in turn came to be closely aligned with the United States and the Soviet Union. By this process, a regional cleavage with its own logic and specificity was subsumed into the great Cold War divide. This grafting of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union onto preexisting Middle Eastern rivalries significantly exacerbated those conflicts in some cases. At the same time, the involvement of the Americans and the Soviets in internecine local quarrels provided opportunities for Middle Eastern clients to extract support from their superpower patrons, which the latter sometimes were obliged to extend against the better judgment of key policymakers.[20]

Saudi Arabia's value to the United States was soon to emerge in yet another sphere: the ideological arena. One of the key convergences of the Cold War era in the Middle East was between the Soviet Union and leftist and Arab nationalist movements in their various forms, including Nasserism, the Ba'th Party, multiple varieties of Arab socialism, the different Arab Communist parties, and other radical parties and groups. Although this Soviet-Arab coalition seemed united by anticolonialism, a commitment to state-led development, contempt for "bourgeois democracy," and some other shared values, it was in fact a profoundly uneasy and heterogeneous agglomeration of forces. There were deep divergences and suspicions. There were also sometimes open conflicts between its disparate component parts and between many of these parties and the various Arab regimes on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. Thus, almost immediately after the Iraqi revolution of 1958, the Communist party in Iraq, backed by the USSR, found itself at odds with the Nasserists, Ba'thists, and other Arab nationalists. This rapidly developed into a lasting conflict inside Iraq and regionally that only became more bitter and sanguinary as time went on. The Egyptian regime and the Soviets eventually were obliged to align themselves with their respective squabbling Iraqi protégés, while keeping their bilateral relations as normal as possible.[21] Notwithstanding these problems between would-be allies, for a time, in the mid-1950s through the early 1970s, this grouping of Arab leftists and nationalists appeared to be a formidable coalition, particularly when aligned with a growing number of nationalist Arab regimes and with the USSR. Indeed, in the context of the "Arab cold war," this coalition seemed to be a winning one, as it claimed to represent the future in the battle against the backwardness of the traditional monarchies and conservative regimes associated with the United States.

This radical wave seemed to place the United States and its allies in a highly unfavorable position. To this apparently unbalanced situation, Saudi Arabia brought the powerful ideological weapon of Islam. This was something the Saudis were uniquely positioned to do, given the centuries-old alliance between the royal family and the rigidly orthodox Wahhabi religious establishment and given the kingdom's special place as the location of two of the three holiest places in Islam—Mecca and Medina. Particularly after the conservative, pious, and ascetic King Faisal, who was viscerally anti-Communist, took over for his older brother Saud in 1962, Saudi Arabia focused more intensively on Islam as the backbone of its resistance to the self-proclaimed "progressive" Arab regimes. It sponsored various pan-Islamic entities as a counterweight to the pan-Arab bodies and parties dominated by Egypt. It spent its oil wealth liberally on spreading the kingdom's puritanical and dogmatic Wahhabi form of Islam and on other forms of religious propaganda all over the world. Finally, Saudi Arabia gave refuge to Islamist political activists persecuted by secular Arab nationalist regimes in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. These included members of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, some of whom had already been spotted by Western intelligence agencies as potentially useful proxies in the Cold War struggle with the radical Arab protégés of the Soviet Union.

Saudi Arabia's use of Islam as an ideological tool was thus a major addition to the arsenal of the United States and its allies among the conservative forces in the Arab and Islamic worlds, which in the mid-1960s seemed largely on the defensive in the face of the Soviet-backed "progressive" Arab regimes. This tool proved so useful that it eventually became an important part of the American ideological arsenal in the Cold War, used by the US intelligence services not only in the Arab countries but also in Pakistan and South Asia, Southeast Asia, Soviet Central Asia, and other parts of the Islamic world. Surprising though it may seem today, given the demonization of radical, militant political Islam in American public discourse, for decades the United States was in some respects *the* major patron of earlier incarnations of just these extreme trends, for reasons linked to the perceived need to use any and all means to wage the Cold War.[22]

There was of course a price attached to this Cold War–driven approach, not least in terms of the ideals and principles that Americans like to believe their foreign policy is based on. While the Soviet Union aligned itself with authoritarian nationalist regimes, American policy backed absolute monarchies in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Arab Gulf states (with the exception of Kuwait) and other nondemocratic, authoritarian regimes in Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Pakistan, and elsewhere from the late 1940s until the 1990s as part of this same Cold War strategy. In so doing, the United States laid little or no stress on promoting democracy, constitutionalism, or human rights in the Middle East. Indeed, in the name of anti-Communism, the United States had previously helped to subvert Middle Eastern democracies with the following actions: supporting the Husni Zaim coup against the constitutionally elected president Shukri al-Quwwatly in Syria in 1949; organizing with Britain the overthrow of Iran's democratically chosen prime minister Muhammad Mussadiq in 1953 and imposing an autocratic regime under Mohamed Reza Shah; and providing Lebanese president Camille Chamoun with the funds to bribe his way to achieving a parliamentary majority in the 1957 elections.[23] In some cases when the United States subverted democracy in the Middle East, Islam served as a screen or an ideological adjunct. In Iran, for example, some elements of the religious establishment became part of the American-supported anti-Mussadiq coalition in 1953. This approach was welcome to the absolutist, antidemocratic elites of the conservative states with which the United States was aligned.

The long-standing inattention of American policymakers to the promotion of democracy and human rights in the Middle East, as well as their Cold War sponsorship of radical Islamic groups and trends, acquire significance in light of more recent conflicts with militant, radical Islamic political movements. Some of these groups, like the Taliban and al-Qa'ida, are lineal descendants of ones the United States was allied with for decades. The Cold War alliance between the United States and these Islamic movements produced bitter fruit long after the Cold War was over. However, this alliance with a politicized, militant, and often extreme form of Islam was a direct function of American policy in the Middle East and beyond during much of the Cold War.

This ideological tool was crucial in rallying conservative forces in the Middle East and beyond at the height of the civil war in Yemen from 1962 to 1967. Egyptian troops and air power backed the pro-Nasserist Yemeni republicans, and Saudi Arabia and its conservative regional allies supported the royalists financially and militarily in a desperate seesaw struggle on the southwestern borders of the Saudi kingdom. Behind both sides in this conflict stood their superpower patrons, the United States and the Soviet Union. The banner of Islam and American backing became the cement that brought together a disparate coalition including Yemeni royalist and tribal forces; the governments of Jordan and Oman, which faced their own radical domestic oppositions; the farther afield governments of Pakistan and Iran under the shah; and Britain and Israel. Included as well in this American-led coalition were elements of the underground Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. As part of this sub rosa regional conflict, Saudi Arabia supported its allies in the Yemeni civil war with weapons and money, Jordan and Iran sent military advisers and some military units to the Dhofar region of Oman to fight against a radical Marxist guerrilla movement that opposed the sultan's regime and the British advisers who propped it up, and British troops fought to hang on to Aden and South Yemen against a tenacious insurgency. Israel, too, was surreptitiously involved in support of the Saudi-backed royalists in Yemen.[24] On the other side, radical groups and Arab nationalist regimes, such as those of Egypt, Algeria, and Iraq, as well as the Soviet Union, gave extensive military support to the Yemeni republicans, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf fighting in Dhofar, and the South Yemeni insurgents.

Since forces aligned with the United States claimed to defend the Middle East against atheistic Communism and its secular Arab nationalist allies, a particular form of militant political Islam thus provided an ideological banner and a critical rallying point. The instrumental employment of radical Islamism as a tool of policy continued to provide a lasting focus for American, Saudi, and Pakistani regional policies, reaching its apogee during the Afghan war against the Soviet occupation from 1979 to 1988 and eventually spawning the Taliban and al-Qa'ida. This was long after the high tide of radical Arab nationalism had ebbed in the wake of the crushing defeat inflicted by Israel on Egypt and Syria in June 1967, and after Egypt and many other

Arab countries had ended their alignment with the Soviet Union. However, the monster spawned in the waning days of the Cold War continued to thrive long after it had ended.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AND THE COLD WAR

The events of the "Arab cold war" were only one example of the many ways in which the larger American-Soviet Cold War had a major impact on the Middle East. The alignment of each of the superpowers with one or another side of the Arab-Israeli conflict was another. Starting in the 1960s and until the end of the Cold War in 1991, the United States backed Israel, while the Soviet Union supported most of the Arab states engaged in the conflict. This fixed alignment did not, however, go back to the earliest phase of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestine war of 1947–1949. During that crucial formative period, the United States and the USSR were on the same side: They both voted in the UN General Assembly in 1947 to partition Palestine in a way that gave the 32 percent Jewish minority 55 percent of the country. Both raced to recognize the independence of the new Jewish state that resulted from that decision on May 15, 1948, and both surreptitiously helped to arm Israel during the war that ensued. Soviet arms, delivered through Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1948, were crucial to Israel's ultimate military victory.

The main reason for the United States taking the position it did, against the professional advice of the State Department and the Pentagon, was simple and can be summed up by President Truman's words regarding the composition of his constituents (quoted earlier in the chapter).[25] The Soviet position, which shifted from anti-Zionism to support for the creation of Israel in a few short months, owed a great deal to Stalin's obsessive concern about Britain's power in the Middle East, which he did not seem to realize was waning rapidly; his suspicions of what he saw as British Arab clients like Transjordan, Iraq, and Egypt; and his mistaken belief that a Jewish state might align itself with the USSR.[26]

Israel and the Soviet Union soon drifted apart, with Israel moving closer to the United States and the Soviet Union eventually developing closer relations with Arab countries that sought to free themselves from direct and indirect control by the old European colonial powers. Thereafter, Britain and France became the main arms suppliers to Israel. Their weapons helped Israel win its next two wars against Arab states—the Suez war against Egypt, which Israel fought in alliance with the British and French in 1956, and the war of June 1967 against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Crucially, France also provided Israel with the wherewithal to produce nuclear weapons, which it did surreptitiously starting in the mid-1950s.[27]

The tripartite Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956 marked another moment when the United States and the USSR found themselves on the same side, in opposing the aggression of the two old colonial powers and their Israeli ally against Egypt. This came at one of the high points of the Cold War, when Soviet forces were engaged in bloodily suppressing the Hungarian uprising and the United States and the Western powers were loudly decrying Soviet brutality. However, the two superpowers both opposed the tripartite attack on Egypt over the Suez, albeit—as in 1948—for different reasons. The Soviets were happy to point to Western imperialist aggression while they put down an uprising in their own imperial backyard. Meanwhile, President Eisenhower was furious at Britain and France for acting without consultation, for doing so with overtly neocolonial motives, and for distracting world public opinion from Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe. The subtext of American displeasure was that Britain and France did not know their place in the new world of the Cold War, where there were only two superpowers and Washington made all the important decisions on the Western side.[28]

The Suez war was the last time until the end of the Cold War that the superpowers found themselves on the same side of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Soon the Arab cold war began, the Eisenhower administration's limited sympathy for the Egyptian regime of Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser was exhausted and the American-Soviet rivalry ratcheted up in the Middle East. The Eisenhower Doctrine resulted from this escalation. It was directed not just at the Soviet Union but at Arab states, like Egypt, that were aligned with the USSR; in the Manichean vision of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, such countries were "controlled by International Communism."[29] The Soviet Union had been supplying Egypt with arms since 1955 (the original arms deal here too was made via Czechoslovakia) and soon was supplying other Arab countries as well. Thereafter the USSR provided aid for the construction of Egypt's Aswan Dam, after the United States reneged on its commitment to do so. The United States was arming Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other allies, and by the 1960s had begun to supply Israel with weapons, initially surreptitiously via West Germany. This arms supply relationship became more overt in the subsequent administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, as the former sent Hawk antiaircraft missiles and the latter A-4 Skyhawk attack bombers to Israel.

The 1967 war, however, marked the full alignment of the United States with Israel and the beginning of Israel's heavy reliance on American weapons systems, starting with the top-of-the-line F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers supplied by the Johnson and Nixon administrations. The massive dependence of Israel on billions of dollars annually in US military and economic aid came a few years later, following the 1973 war. By this time, the United States had come to see Israel as its most valuable ally in the Middle East region in the global struggle with the USSR and its proxies. Israel fit perfectly into the Nixon administration's strategy of Vietnamization—finding local proxies to serve US interests—and it was seen as more valuable even than Iran under the shah, as demonstrated by America's willingness to deliver to Israel weapons that neither Iran nor NATO allies received.

Policymakers in the Johnson and Nixon administrations faced a scenario in which they saw the USSR and China as pinning the United States down in Southeast Asia at little cost to themselves through what they myopically perceived as their Vietnamese proxies. They looked to Israel to even the score against the Soviet Union's proxies, Egypt and Syria, at little direct cost to the United States. The Soviets in turn could not allow themselves to be left behind. They upped the ante further after the 1967 war by writing off Egypt's and Syria's debts for military equipment destroyed or captured by Israel during the war, and by delivering massive amounts of new arms, notably surface-to-air missiles, including the SAM-2, SAM-3, and the new SAM-6. The two superpowers raised the stakes during the 1968–1970 war of attrition along the Suez Canal, when the Egyptians pushed their air defenses to the edge of the Suez Canal, making possible a crossing of this great antitank barrier a few years later. During this fierce phase of the Arab-Israeli wars, Soviets advised Egyptian air defense crews and Soviet pilots directly engaged in combat, and the most advanced combat aircraft, antiaircraft missiles, and radar were sent to Egypt. Naturally, the United States countered with deliveries of top-of-the-line military equipment to Israel.[30]

Finally, in the 1973 war, Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger ordered the airlift of massive quantities of military equipment to Israel when its stocks were in danger of running out. This escalatory sequence from 1967 until 1973 was driven, incidentally, as much by the clients on both sides as by the competition between their superpower patrons, as Israel refused to negotiate seriously with Egypt in spite of American remonstrance, and the Egyptians insisted on a military option in spite of the deep reluctance of the Soviet military.[31] Throughout this six-year period, both superpowers sent their respective allies advanced weaponry and became more directly committed themselves. In the final stages of the 1973 war, the United States placed its armed forces worldwide on a general nuclear alert, DEFCON 3, in response to reports that several Soviet paratroop divisions had been placed on alert and that the USSR was shipping nuclear warheads to its forces in the Mediterranean.[32] The Soviets were reacting to Israel's refusal to obey a UN-mandated cease-fire, as its armored forces continued to roll toward Cairo after crossing the Suez Canal. In a message to Nixon, Soviet Communist Party general secretary Leonid Brezhnev demanded a joint superpower intervention to end the war, failing which the Soviets threatened to intervene unilaterally. They were apparently on the point of doing so when Kissinger raised the ante by ordering a nuclear alert while at the same time calling for a halt to the Israeli advance. Though this event has received less attention than the Cuban missile crisis a decade earlier, here again the superpowers had seemingly been brought to the brink of a nuclear confrontation, this time by their proxy competition in the Arab-Israeli arena.

By this point, the Cold War rivalry as played out through the Arab-Israeli conflict had taken on a dynamic of its own. This can be seen in the behavior of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger and in the actions of their Soviet opposite numbers. Nixon and Kissinger's objective was to expel the Soviets from Egypt and to win it over to the United States' side. This objective incidentally fit in perfectly with the aims of Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat, who was eager, together with his military high command, to get out from under the Soviet thumb and receive American support (which he eventually did win). The Soviets' aim was to retain their foothold in the region at all costs. Much of their large military presence in Egypt by this point—more than twenty thousand "advisers"—was in fact involved in maintaining a naval base under exclusive Soviet control that was used to keep track of the movements of US submarines carrying submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) in the Mediterranean.

For both superpowers, these and other Cold War aims were far more important than the ups and downs of the Arab-Israeli conflict itself or peace between Arabs and

Israelis.[33] Partly as a consequence of the single-minded concentration of both superpowers on besting each other, that conflict came no closer to final resolution during the Cold War. There were a number of efforts toward such a resolution, most of them desultory: a brief single session of a peace conference at Geneva in 1973; three disengagement agreements negotiated by Henry Kissinger, two between Egypt and Israel and one between Syria and Israel; the American-Soviet joint communiqué of 1977 calling for a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement to be negotiated at a multilateral peace conference; and the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, which emerged after President Jimmy Carter's 1978 mediation at Camp David. Yet in spite of these initiatives, no comprehensive resolution of the conflict was achieved. Gaining advantages in their rivalry with one another ultimately was far more important to the superpowers than was peace in the Middle East, which consequently got relatively low priority in their efforts in the region.

THE COLD WAR AND THE KURDS

There are many other instances of how the overarching Cold War rivalry distorted outcomes in the Middle East. Decisions on economic development, domestic policies, the balance of forces between political parties, and majority-minority relations within states in the region were affected by the machinations of the Soviets and the Americans in their unceasing rivalry with one another.

To take one case, consider the tragic example of how the Kurds in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey became pawns in regional rivalries that came to be subsumed in the confrontation between the superpowers. The episodes of this ill-starred story began with the proclamation of the Kurdish Mahabad Republic in January 1946, when Soviet troops were still occupying northern Iran, including Iranian Kurdistan. This initiative marked the establishment of the first autonomous Kurdish entity, one that Stalin initially supported but soon abandoned.[34] One of the key leaders of the Mahabad Republic, its defense minister, the Iraqi Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani, escaped and ended up in the Soviet Union. He returned in 1958 to his native Iraq, where his Kurdish Democratic Party launched a series of revolts against different governments in Baghdad, including a major uprising with Iranian, American, and Israeli support against the Ba'th regime in 1974–1975. This ended with the betrayal of the Kurds in the 1975 Algiers agreement between Iran and Iraq with the collusion of Henry Kissinger. The United States had blessed the Iran-Iraq accord, which entailed the United States and Iran abandoning their support for the ongoing Kurdish revolt against the Iraqi regime that these two powers had helped instigate. Thereafter Kissinger excused this betrayal before an appalled congressional committee with the words, "Covert action should not be confused with missionary work."[35]

The Iraqi regime slaughtered, with gas and other means, thousands of Kurdish villagers in the course of the Iran-Iraq war of 1979–1988, during which the superpowers played both sides of the street in their tireless efforts to gain advantage over each other. Thus the United States and its allies encouraged the Iraqi Ba'thist regime to go to war with the Islamic revolutionary government in Iran, supplying Iraq with intelligence and with the means to engage in gas warfare against Iran (and also its own Kurdish population), while the Reagan administration later surreptitiously contacted Iran as part of the illegal Iran-Contra conspiracy, delivering to it much-needed parts for Hawk SAM missiles. The Soviets, meanwhile, were no less callous and self-serving, supplying arms to the Iraqi forces while also selling armored vehicles and missiles to the Iranians. In all of this, the Kurds were left to their fate by the two superpowers, which cynically exploited them against what they perceived as each other's regional proxies, and then just as cynically dropped them when they were no longer of any use. This recurring trope in Kurdish history, of adoption and then abandonment by great power protectors, which had its precedent in similar behavior by the British at the end of World War I, risks being repeated once again in northern Iraq and Syria should the United States eventually decide that it no longer needs the Kurds as proxies in that distant, landlocked region.[36]

Even as the Iran-Iraq war, which devastated the Kurds as well as both warring countries, was starting, the Soviet Union made an ultimately fatal decision to invade Afghanistan to prop up a crumbling pro-Soviet regime. In so doing, it sent the Red Army across a Cold War line that had not been crossed since the end of World War II and set off alarm bells all over the Western world. The Carter administration responded vigorously by supplying support to anti-Soviet Afghan guerrillas, the mujahideen, in a bid to bleed Soviet forces. Carter was succeeded in the White House by the much more assertive Reagan administration, which saw in Afghanistan an opportunity to do much greater harm to the Soviet Union. Indeed, Afghanistan opened for the Reagan team the long-sought prospect of bringing down the entire "evil empire." Reagan's administration included a number of the most vigorous proponents of the aggressive prosecution of the Cold War since the mid-1950s. In some senses they were more aggressive than even Dulles had been: for all his messianic anti-Communist bluster, Eisenhower's secretary of state had been committed to the Cold War doctrine of containment propounded by the pragmatic George Kennan.[37] By contrast, many of the neoconservatives in the Reagan administration favored a radical strategy of "rolling back" Communism, a belligerent approach that had never become established doctrine in Washington, even at the height of the Cold War. With the most viscerally anti-Communist administration since that of Herbert Hoover in office, rollback of regimes perceived to be under Soviet influence the world over became its policy.

Activating the old radical Islamist allies with which it had worked during the Cold War and the Arab cold war, the CIA under William Casey, with the support of the Saudi, Pakistani, and other intelligence services, helped to field a force of Afghans, together with Arab volunteers and others that it brought in from all over the Islamic world. This eventually proved to be more than a match for the Soviet occupation forces and their Afghan allies, who went down to a staggering defeat. But after the bloodied Red Army crossed back into the Soviet Union in 1988, the lethal, divided, and ill-disciplined mujahideen movement that these cold warriors had helped to fashion eventually metastasized into forces that continued to engage in an endless war that engulfed Afghanistan. That war raged for decades afterward, largely directed against the United States. Militant networks that grew out of the thousands of Arab and other Muslim volunteers brought to Afghanistan by the American and allied intelligence services developed into al-Qa'ida, which in turn spawned the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). All of these brutal, nihilistic, and violent organizations and forces are ghosts of the Cold War, bastard children born of the blowback of a now conveniently forgotten era.

Soon after the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan and after the Iran-Iraq war ended in mutual exhaustion, the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe and the rest of Eurasia began to crumble, and the Soviet Union itself finally disappeared in 1991. The Cold War was over, but its tragic sequels, its toxic debris, and its unexploded mines continue to cause great harm in the present day. The tragic outcome of 9/11 represents one of these sequels, the evil work of the distant but very real ghosts originally conjured up by the United States to wage the last phases of the Cold War. The Cold War is over and the Soviet Union is no more, but those ghosts are still with us, in the Middle East and elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

Did the Cold War in the Middle East prevent the United States from exercising unfettered hegemony over that region until the Soviet Union was out of the way? Or was the American perception of Soviet power exaggerated, and was the USSR in fact less of an obstacle to American domination of the Middle East than it may have seemed? My inclination is toward the latter view. The Middle East, like most of the other major arenas of Cold War rivalry, was immediately adjacent to the USSR. There were no such Cold War battlefields in the immediate vicinity of the United States, with the exception of Cuba and, for a brief period in the 1980s, parts of Central America. Thus, from soon after 1945, it was the United States that was containing the Soviet Union and stationing forces and strategic weapons all around the USSR's frontiers and those of its satellites, and not vice versa.

Even after the USSR detonated an atomic bomb in 1949, shifting the strategic balance somewhat in its favor, it had no assured delivery system for nuclear weapons until the deployment of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) in the mid-1960s. Thereafter, both powers soon became capable of destroying one another many times over. These are all indications, nevertheless, of the great superiority of the United States over the USSR. This superiority was most importantly based on the far greater economic power of the United States and its postwar dominance of the European and Japanese economies; the two alone produced more than the Soviet economy little more than a decade after World War II.

To be sure, the USSR also had certain advantages. By its very location it dominated the Eurasian landmass, and it had vast land armies. It also had an initial ideological advantage in Europe because of the presence of strong Communist parties there, and a similar advantage in much of the developing world in the face of the persistence of European colonialism. This ideological edge operated in the Middle East for a time. Although the USSR was a great power, in many respects it was not truly a superpower, lacking the economic might of the United States or the global reach that the latter enjoyed with its fleets, air forces, and far-flung military bases. All of these American strategic advantages can be seen operating in the Middle East, where a quiet struggle was waged, first in the Mediterranean, when in the 1960s the US Navy first based Polaris SLBM-carrying submarines targeting the USSR and the Soviets sought naval and air bases in the region to counter them. These advantages could be seen operating again in the 1970s when the US deployment of longer-range Poseidon SLBM-carrying submarines turned the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean into a similar theater of naval competition. In the Middle East and elsewhere, the United States was taking the initiative by stationing strategic weapons in the USSR's backyard, not vice versa (with the brief exception of Khrushchev's Cuban adventure). Thereafter, the United States was able to use its formidable economic power to help wean Egypt and other Arab states away from their former Soviet patrons with generous promises of aid.

Thus, while the struggle for influence in the Middle East seesawed back and forth and at times looked desperate to some in Washington, the United States always had the strategic upper hand. This became apparent when formerly radical Arab nationalist regimes like that of Egypt under Sadat in the 1970s and later that of Iraq under Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war defected to the American side. For all the rhetoric in Washington about countries in the Middle East "controlled by international communism" in the 1950s, these Arab nationalist regimes and their elites were never drawn ideologically to the USSR. Quite the contrary, all of them were deeply, fundamentally anti-Communist, and none were staunchly anticapitalist (the sole exception in the entire Middle East was South Yemen). Even where Communist parties had a role in the domestic politics of Middle Eastern countries, Communists were never close to being in control of them. The attraction of Middle Eastern rulers to both sides in the Cold War was purely based on naked power. As it became apparent to most Middle Eastern elites that the United States was richer and more powerful than the Soviet Union, they eventually tended to gravitate toward Washington. Even the revulsion caused by Washington's bias in favor of Israel was not enough to alienate many Arab governments. We have seen this in the case of Saudi Arabia. It was equally true of other reliably pro-American regimes. After Sadat's "apostasy" in leaving the pro-Soviet camp in 1972, it became increasingly clear that the United States could have its Israeli cake and eat it too, something that still appears true today.

This leaves us with one last question. This arises in light of the unprecedented unrest that has plagued the Middle East in the decades since the end of the Cold War, including major direct military interventions by the US and Russia and the collapse of what previously seemed to be strong states into anarchy in the midst of fierce civil wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. This question is whether, in spite of its many negative effects on the region, some of which have been described in this chapter, the Cold War may have served to limit or at least restrain direct external intervention, and thereby to stabilize the region. Certainly the multiple Arab-Israeli wars, the Yemeni civil war, and the devastating Iran-Iraq war all took place in the midst of the Cold War. Both superpowers and their allies provided the arms with which these wars were fought, and they thereby exacerbated these and other regional conflicts. Nevertheless, if nothing else, during the Cold War the superpowers' fear that unrestrained conflict in the Middle East would lead to a direct confrontation between them may have provided some limits to what could happen. It would be a great irony if one day we were to look back on the era of intense superpower rivalry in the Middle East from 1945 until 1990 with nostalgia as one of relative stability and calm in comparison to what followed.

Notes

1. This chapter is mainly drawn from Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon, 2009).

2. For the text, see Winston Churchill, "The Sinews of Peace," in Mark A. Kishlansky, ed., *Sources of World History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 298–302.

3. A. C. Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities: The History and the Moral Legacy of the WWII Bombing of Civilians in Germany and Japan* (New York: Walker, 2006), 159, notes Churchill's thinking as early as 1944 about rearming Germany to help in an expected confrontation with the Soviet Union.

4. Among the best of these works is Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang), 2007. Geoffrey Roberts notes in "Stalin and Soviet Foreign Policy," in another excellent book, M. Leffler and D. Painter, eds., *The Origins of the Cold War,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 42–57, that Soviet policymakers' private expressions of their views track closely with their public statements. This assertion is at odds with the conventional American narrative on the topic, as exemplified by the prolific work of the doyen of American Cold War historians, John Lewis Gaddis, e.g., *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

5. Notable exceptions include Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Robert McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

6. Works that touch on this topic include Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The Cold War and the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs and U.S.–Middle East Relations in the 1970s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Nigel Ashton, ed., *The Cold War in the Middle East: Regional Conflict and the Superpowers, 1967–1973* (London: Routledge, 2007); Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs Behind the Scenes in the Middle East from the Cold War to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2009); Craig Daigle, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); and Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Post–Cold War Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

7. See Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon, 2004); and Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire,* 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, 2004).

8. Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 403–405.

9. The account of Colonel William Eddy, the head of the American legation at Jeddah who organized and translated at the meeting, provides much valuable detail. See William Eddy, *FDR Meets Ibn Saud* (1954; reprint, Vista, CA: Selwa, 2005).

10. Eddy, *FDR Meets Ibn Saud,* 33.

11. US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 8:698.

12. Ibid., 755.

13. Eddy, *FDR Meets Ibn Saud,* 34–35.

14. See H. St. John Philby, *Arabia of the Wahhabis* (London: Constable, 1928) and *Saudi Arabia* (New York: Praeger, 1958); as well as Elizabeth Monroe, *Philby of Arabia* (London: Faber, 1973).

15. Libya, a former Italian colony, was another such country, and a US airfield that accommodated more than four thousand airmen and a wing of nuclear-armed strategic bombers was set up there, and was vacated only in 1969.

16. Until the first intercontinental bomber, the B-52, came into service in the late 1950s, and before intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles were deployed in the 1960s, the American nuclear arsenal was carried by bombers of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), whose maximum ranges were less than four thousand miles. They needed bases around the periphery of the Soviet Union in order to reach targets deep in the Soviet hinterland. Middle Eastern bases were particularly important to provide SAC bombers with the ability to reach targets to the east of the Urals and in Central Asia and Transcaucasia, where much of Soviet oil production and industry, especially military industry, was located.

17. Saud bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud succeeded his father, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, on the old king's death in 1953.

18. The text can be found at http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst203/ documents/eisen.html.

19. In Malcolm Kerr's book, *The Arab Cold War: 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958–1970*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

20. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Red Star on the Nile: The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship Since the June War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); and Waldemar Gallman, *Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollections of Nuri Al-Said, 1954–1958* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), chaps. 4–5.

21. Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 764–973.

22. One of the best accounts of this American strategy can be found in Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim.* See also Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010).

23. For Iran, see Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); and James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988). For the Syrian and Lebanon cases, see Wilbur Crane Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980). Eveland was a key figure in US intelligence activity in Syria and Lebanon.

24. For this period see Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans: A Political Survey of Instability in the Arab World* (London: Penguin, 1974), as well as the indispensable Kerr, *Arab Cold War*. See also Jesse Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble: How the Intervention in the Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Israeli Connection: Whom Israel Arms and Why* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1987).

25. Eddy, *FDR Meets Ibn Saud,* 34–35. See also John Snetsinger, *Truman, the Jewish Vote, and Israel* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1974); Irene Gendzier, *Dying to Forget: Oil, Power, Palestine, and the Foundations of U.S. Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia

University Press, 2015); and John Judis, *Genesis: Truman, American Jews, and the Origins of the Arab/Israeli Conflict* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014).

26. Arnold Krammer, *The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947–53* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

27. Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 49ff.

28. Herman Finer, *Dulles over Suez: The Theory and Practice of His Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Diane Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen, eds., *1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

29. Selim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Irene Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945–1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); and David W. Lesch, *Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992).

30. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli-Egyptian War of Attrition, 1969–1970: A Case-Study of Limited Local War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Edgar O'Ballance, *The Electronic War in the Middle East, 1968–70* (London: Faber, 1974); and Lawrence Whetten, *The Canal War: Four-Power Conflict in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974).

31. Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (London: Collins, 1975). There is a wealth of US documentation attesting to the frustration of Secretary of State Rogers with the Israeli government for its stubborn rejection of Egyptian peace overtures in the years leading up to the 1973 war: see Steven Galpern, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–76*, vol. 23, *Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1969–1972* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2015).

32. Kissinger did not even consult Nixon on this move. Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007). The US documents on this and other remarkable wartime events can be found in Nina Howland and Craig Daigle, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–76*, vol. 25, *Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2011). On the 1973 war, see Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan;* Saad el-Shazly, *The Crossing of Suez: The October War 1973* (London: Third World Center, 1980); Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975); Zeev Schiff, *October Earthquake: Yom Kippur 1973* (Tel Aviv: University Publishing, 1974).

33. Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis,* 125–137.

34. See Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis,* chap. 2, for details.

35. Jonathan C. Randal, *After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness: My Encounters with Kurdistan* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997).

36. Susan Meisalas with Martin van Bruinessen, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (New York: Random House, 1997).

37. Published under the pseudonym X as "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947.

PART III

Arab-Israeli War and Peace

Since the emergence of the state of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab-Israeli conflict, there has seemingly been a recurrent cycle of conflict followed by missed opportunities for peace or the establishment of something less than a comprehensive peace, which in turn has created an environment in which tensions continue and issues remain unresolved, which then leads to the resumption of some form of conflict—and so forth and so on. The role of the United States in this process has varied considerably—from pacifier to antagonist, from mediator to peacemaker, from belligerent to bystander. This section examines the role the United States has played in this seemingly never-ending cycle. At the close of the Cold War, there was a widely held perception that this cycle could be broken with a sustainable comprehensive peace in the Arab-Israeli arena, and a number of important steps were made to facilitate the achievement of this. However, the breakdown of the Oslo and Madrid peace processes became apparent in the administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, and the current situation in the region shows that there remain significant obstacles to a complete resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Fawaz Gerges begins this section (Chapter 9) with a discussion of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which initiated the peace process as we know it today and effectively brought the superpower Cold War together with the Arab-Israeli issue. The Soviets became intimately involved in the 1969–1970 war of attrition and the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, resulting in a near confrontation between the superpowers during the latter stages of the 1973 hostilities. In examining the impact of the 1967 war on Arab nationalist perceptions of the United States, Gerges argues that the war had a "devastating negative impact" on Arab views of the US role in the peace process. Nevertheless, the "indispensable and preponderant" role of Washington in this process was made abundantly clear: the United States "held most of the cards."

In Chapter 10, Andrew Bowen examines US-Syrian relations in the immediate aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, particularly the arduous negotiations over a disengagement agreement on the Golan Heights, between Syria and Israel, which was brokered by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in his infamous step-by-step approach. In detailing the intricacies of the negotiations, Bowen discusses how the United States (and Israel) prioritized furthering the disengagement process with Egypt over Syria, as the former was seen as the bigger prize in terms of ending a state of belligerency with Israel—and from the US perspective, peeling away Egypt, the biggest and most powerful Arab country at the time, from the Soviet camp was of utmost importance. The destructive level of the 1973 war scared straight just about all of the regional and international players, causing them to seek some sort of a pressure relief valve. This energized a negotiation process, but the emphasis on Egypt combined with the failure to follow up with the Syrian track contributed to what in essence was a separate peace between Egypt and Israel in 1979 instead of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli agreement.

In Chapter 11, Jeremy Pressman outlines the Oslo and Madrid peace processes through the failed Camp David meeting in July 2000 brokered by President Bill Clinton, and he critically examines the roles played by each of the principal players, including the United States. In the process, Pressman offers some cogent reasons why both the Oslo and Madrid Accords broke down.

In Chapter 12, the final chapter of this part, Robert O. Freedman covers in intricate detail the policies of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations toward the Arab-Israeli arena. Freedman reveals the complexities of the Arab-Israeli dynamic and the obstacles to reaching comprehensive, lasting peace agreements. The United States' focus and role shifted during the course of these two-term presidencies, having to adjust to the breakdown of the Oslo and Madrid peace processes, yet each was unsuccessful in moving toward an Israeli-Palestinian final accord, which would have laid the foundation for an overall Arab-Israeli peace.

Amid the turmoil in the Arab world initiated by the Arab uprisings in late 2010 and into 2011, progress on the Palestinian-Israeli front has stagnated, yet regional dynamics have produced some interesting opportunities for an improvement in relations between Israel and individual Arab states that may or may not create a more conducive environment for a comprehensive agreement.

CHAPTER 9

THE 1967 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

US Actions and Arab Perceptions

Fawaz A. Gerges

On more than one level the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war (also known as the Six-Day War) was a watershed in the recent history of the Middle East. In particular, the confrontation radically transformed the nature of regional politics and the relationship between local states and the superpowers. On the one hand, the Arab-Israeli dispute became the most dominant single foreign policy issue in the external relations of the Arab states. The main focus of regional instability shifted from inter-Arab politics to Arab-Israeli interactions. The war also set the stage for the contemporary Arab-Israeli peace process. For the previous ten years, the dispute between Israel and the Arabs had been kept on ice, moving neither toward resolution nor toward war.[1] In this sense, the Six-Day War was a catalyst that forced Israel and the Arabs as well as their superpower patrons to participate in the quest for peace. On the other hand, the bloody escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict made local players much more dependent on their superpower allies. As a result, the Arab-Israeli conflict became increasingly entangled in the US-Soviet Cold War rivalry. Thus, bipolarity on the international stage was reflected on the regional level. The increased reliance of the local states on the superpowers restricted their freedom of action and compromised their independence.

This chapter examines the impact of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war on Arab nationalist perceptions regarding the input that the United States had in the crisis, in order to examine how these perceptions influenced Arab attitudes toward the US and Soviet roles in the peace process. I argue that the Six-Day War had a devastating negative impact on Arab views regarding the US role, as well as on Arab beliefs about the efficacy of the Soviet Union and its reliability as a superpower ally. Although Arab nationalists, particularly in Egypt, were highly critical and suspicious of President Lyndon B. Johnson, they recognized the indispensable and preponderant role of Washington in the post-1967 peace process. They believed the United States wielded much influence over its client, Israel, and held most of the cards in the peace process.

In contrast, Arab rulers, and not just Egyptian president Gamal ʻAbd al-Nasser, became conscious of the limited nature of Soviet power and prestige in world politics. Their experiences with the Soviet Union during the 1967 crisis convinced them that Moscow did not have the means or the will to defend the Arabs. This belated realization played a decisive role in the mellowing of Egyptian radicalism during the post-1967 period and, one might venture to claim, in the revolutionary reorientation of Egyptian foreign policy throughout the 1970s.

Thus, this chapter must address several critical questions: How did the Arab confrontational states, particularly Egypt, respond to their crushing defeat at the hands of Israel in June 1967? How did they perceive the role of the superpowers in the war, and did their perceptions of the two contrasting superpower positions influence their behavior toward the peace process? What was the impact of the US-Soviet rivalry on the dynamics of peacemaking? Why did President Johnson abandon previous US support for the 1949 armistice regime, and how did this radical change in US policy complicate the quest for peace? To what extent did the dramatic alteration in the regional balance of power inhibit both Israel and Arab rulers' willingness and ability to compromise? In this sense, did the 1967 war sow the seeds of a bloodier conflagration in the Middle East?

ARAB PERCEPTIONS OF THE US ROLE IN THE 1967 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

The polarization of the Arab-Israeli conflict along East-West lines was directly related to the crushing defeat of the Arab states in 1967 and their perceptions that the United States had colluded with Israel to destroy the "revolutionary Arab regimes which had refused to be a part of the Western sphere of influence."[2] Nasser, the leading Arab nationalist, believed that his regime was the main target of the US-sponsored Israeli attack. He told Mohamed Heikal, a confidant of his, that Johnson had succeeded in "trapping us." For Nasser, this collusion entailed a complex set of political and diplomatic tricks and maneuvers. Moreover, the Egyptian leadership—not just Nasser—believed that the Johnson administration had indirectly colluded with Israel by covering its flanks and neutralizing the Soviet Union and by deliberately deceiving Egypt and lulling it into a state of complacency.[3]

The Egyptians pointed to the fact that although the United States had secured from Egypt a commitment not to fire first, it had failed to extract a similar pledge from Israel. They said that Egypt was under overwhelming pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union not to fire first. They argued that the Johnson administration impressed on Soviet leaders the urgent need to call upon its Egyptian ally to desist from any military adventure. To show his goodwill, Nasser had declared publicly that he would not be the one to initiate hostilities. He said he was given the impression that Israel had also committed itself not to shoot first.[4]

Little wonder, then, that the Arab nationalists were very bitter after Israel's preemptive strike on June 5. They felt overwhelming resentment and anger toward the Johnson administration, fueled initially by official Egyptian and Jordanian accusations that the United States had participated alongside Israel in the first air attacks against the Arab forces.[5] Although unfounded, these accusations served to confirm a widely held Arab stereotype of US hostility. In particular, the Egyptians felt deceived by the United States; they also believed that the United States had involved an unwitting Soviet Union in its strategy to mislead Egypt.

Nasser asserted that the US government had helped Israel in several ways by providing it with intelligence and weapons. For example, Israel's June 8 attack on the USS *Liberty*—a US intelligence ship stationed off the Sinai coast—convinced the Egyptian leader of Johnson's complicity: the *Liberty* supplied Israel with critical intelligence about Egyptian military installations. In this context, Nasser claimed that Johnson had known and had approved of Israeli war plans in advance. As Nasser put it, the US role in the war was a continuation of its shutting off of aid to Egypt: having failed to subdue Egypt through economic warfare, Johnson instigated Israel to use physical force instead.[6] Nasser said the United States "must be made to feel the brunt of its collusion with Israel. We must bring the weight of mobilized Arab anger to bear on her. The severing of relations is imperative."[7] This perception, or rather misperception, was shared by all the confrontation Arab states (most importantly, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq), which promptly broke diplomatic relations with Washington.

To understand the rationale behind Arab perceptions, one has to focus on the nature of the relationship between the Johnson administration and the Arab nationalist forces, particularly on the steady deterioration of US-Egyptian relations since the end of 1964. The gradual suspension of US food aid to Egypt beginning in 1965, coupled with the direct supply of arms to Israel and other conservative states in the area, embittered Egyptian leaders and convinced them that Johnson not only was determined to humiliate and starve their country to death but also was working closely with their regional enemies to overthrow the revolutionary Arab governments.[8] In September 1965 the Egyptian ambassador to Washington informed a senior US diplomat that the Egyptian leadership believed that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was seeking to topple the Nasser regime.[9]

By the end of 1966 Nasser seemed to have lost hope for US policy, viewed as irredeemably pro-Israeli and anti-Egyptian.[10] The mood in Washington was equally hostile: "We're not angry [with Nasser]; we're fed up," wrote Harold Saunders, a key National Security Council (NSC) official dealing with the Middle East.[11] The US ambassador to Egypt, Lucius Battle, also said that a good deal of uncertainty and tension and a general sense of discouragement existed in US-Egyptian relations. The two countries, asserted the ambassador, were on a "slippery slope headed toward confrontation of the 1957–58 type." He warned his superiors in Washington to bear in mind that they were approaching a watershed in their relationship with Egypt.[12]

THE ARAB VIEW OF THE US ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS

The general Arab view of the US role in the 1967 war and in the subsequent peace process should be studied squarely within this context of polarized suspicion and distrust. The Arab nationalists had no faith in the Johnson administration as a neutral mediator in the quest for peace. To them, an identity of interests existed between the White House and Israel, manifesting itself in Johnson's unequivocal support of Israel in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and Security Council and subsequent actions, which were designed to ensure Israel's military superiority over all its Arab neighbors.[13] Arab rulers had a fixation with the United States, which, in their opinion, determined questions of war and peace in the Middle East. They failed to appreciate the complexity of US-Israeli relations and the wide degree of autonomy that Israeli leaders exercised in their ceaseless quest for absolute security.

In both 1956 and 1967, Nasser and his Arab counterparts did not consider seriously the possibility that Israel, by manipulating the polarized international system, was capable of acting on its own in the pursuit of its national interests, with or without superpower collusion. Israel was simply seen as an instrument and agent of the Western powers and imperialism, performing at the behest of its masters; Israel was not working for itself alone but was serving as a US tool to dominate the Arab world. In the words of Algerian president Houari Boumedienne, "Israel played a secondary role in the 1967 war. The battle was American, and only the performance was Israeli." Likewise, Nasser said that the United States—not Israel—was the main party with which to discuss the occupation of Arab territories.[14] Although some of this was merely hyperbole, Arab politicians really believed that the United States held the key to war and peace in the region. Reading the recollections, speeches, and some minutes of the meetings of Arab officials, one gets the impression that Johnson had the power and the means to force Israel to withdraw to the prewar borders but did not want to employ them.[15]

Despite the vehemence of his attack on US policy, Nasser was in no position to confront the United States in the region. When the dust settled over the desert, Nasser found the bulk of his army destroyed, the Sinai occupied, his coffers empty, and his political career in jeopardy. Unlike after the war of 1956, Nasser could not turn a military defeat into a political victory. In fact, the Six-Day War was markedly different from the Suez crisis. In 1956 Nasser could rightly claim that Egyptian capabilities were no match for the combined forces of Britain, France, and Israel. In spite of his efforts, Nasser could not repeat the same political performance in 1967. The "most powerful state in the Middle East" had been decisively beaten and humiliated by a young, vigorous, and small nation.

As a result, Nasser's status and position in the Arab world were weakened. With the totality of defeat, Nasser's long-term goal of constructing a new Arab order disappeared. Undermined were the symbols and ideas of secular Arab nationalism that had served as the building blocks for this order. The revolutionary ideal was discredited in Arab politics. In inter-Arab relations, the overall balance of forces shifted dramatically in favor of the Arab conservatives, who held the power of the purse and who shaped the politics of the inter-Arab state system during the post-1967 period.

Furthermore, the Arab nationalists could no longer rely on the sympathy of world public opinion or on the active intervention of the superpowers. They did not understand the changed international situation in the late 1960s. The United States was bogged down in Vietnam and was not terribly focused on the Middle East. Likewise preoccupied at home and abroad, the Kremlin leadership was building bridges to the West in the hope of gaining economic and political concessions. The Soviets were against a war in the Middle East that might involve them in a direct clash with the United States (and thus endanger their new approach to the West).[16] The Arab radicals were mistaken in their assumption that the Soviets would intervene in a Middle East war. Such thinking was symptomatic of the prevailing, pervasive tendency of the regional actors to inflate their own importance. After the 1967 war, Nasser told his colleagues that he had not weighed carefully the changes in Soviet foreign policy after the death of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.[17]

More significant to the Kremlin leadership were the nuclear stalemate with the United States and the perennial question of international security. In the Six-Day War, US and Soviet policymakers communicated at the highest levels to contain the conflict and to prevent its spread and expansion. They exerted considerable pressures on their local allies to accept a cease-fire. Although the war was short, the superpowers used the hotline more than once to clarify any misunderstanding that might force them into an unwanted confrontation. In the aftermath of the war, top US and Soviet officials held talks to try to find a political solution.[18]

Although the Soviets were critical of Israel's actions in June 1967 and were supportive of the Arabs, they did not take concrete measures—except to promise to resupply arms—to help their friends. The Soviets could not even offer their Arab allies much support in the UN Security Council because of US objections to any resolution stipulating that Israel withdraw behind the 1949 armistice lines.[19] It was not until June 10 that the Soviet Union took drastic steps to halt the Israeli advance on the Syrian front. According to Johnson, Soviet premier Alexei Kosygin used the hotline to inform him that as the result of Israel's ignoring all UN Security Council resolutions for a cease-fire, a very crucial moment had arrived. Kosygin foresaw the risk of a "grave catastrophe" unless Israel unconditionally terminated its military operations within the next few hours. Otherwise, the Soviet premier warned, his government would take all "necessary actions, including military." In addition, the Soviet Union severed diplomatic relations with Israel and threatened to take stronger measures unless the latter ceased hostilities immediately.[20]

Although he recognized that the Soviet Union was sensitive about its special relationship with Syria, Johnson said that he was determined to resist Soviet intrusion in the Middle East. His immediate response was to issue orders to the US Navy's Sixth Fleet to move closer to the Syrian coast so as to send a warning signal to the Kremlin:

"There are times when the wisdom and rightness of a President's judgment are critically important. We were at such a moment. The Soviets had made a decision. I had to respond."[21]

But neither the United States nor the Soviet Union had the stomach for a clash. The Soviets knew that pressure from the US government was the only way to stop an Israeli advance deep into Syria. Their warning to Johnson was designed to impress upon him the need to halt Tel Aviv's march toward Damascus. Soviet calculations proved correct. According to senior Israeli officials, on June 10 the Johnson administration informed its ally that the situation had reached a dangerous point and that Soviet intervention was no longer inconceivable. Israel agreed to a cease-fire on the same day, following the occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights.[22]

A crisis between the superpowers was thus averted. Their high-level contacts had effectively prevented an open clash between them. As the CIA put it, the Soviet Union had no intention of intervening militarily in the war and so did what it could to avoid confrontation. Another major concern of the Kremlin leadership, argued a CIA intelligence assessment, was to forestall a disastrous Arab defeat that would make the Kremlin the target of Arab criticisms.[23] As a superpower, the Soviet Union was more concerned about its relationship with the United States than with any abstract obligations to its regional partners. The logic of superpower politics took priority over other interests.

Given the ambivalent position of the Soviet Union, one would have expected Nasser to swallow his pride and mend fences with the Johnson administration. In the case of the Suez conflict, Nasser knew that it was the United States rather than the Soviet Union that ultimately forced the tripartite coalition to cease fire and withdraw. In 1967, however, Nasser believed that Johnson had unleashed Israel's military action against Egypt to topple his progressive regime. He asserted that, unlike Eisenhower, who played the leading and most effective role in thwarting the tripartite aggression, Johnson played a decisive role in Israel's swift victory over the Arabs.[24]

By using the last weapon in his arsenal—severing diplomatic relations with the US government—and by making accusations against the United States, Nasser embittered Johnson and made him more determined to prevent Nasser from regaining a position of pan-Arab leadership. The US president made it clear that the United States "could not afford to repeat the temporary and hasty arrangements" between Egypt and Israel after Suez. Johnson now had the opportunity to try a different approach, by supporting Israel's hold on the newly occupied territories pending Arab consent to make peace with Israel.[25]

Indeed, as soon as the fighting started, Johnson, as former ambassador Richard Parker puts it, "showed a clear and lasting bias in favor of Israel and a disregard for the public commitments he and his administration had made to oppose aggression from any quarter."[26] The United States became more closely allied with Israel in opposition to vital Arab interests. The extremely pro-Israeli stand of US public opinion, coupled with Arab hostility and Johnson's dislike of Nasser, enabled Johnson to adopt a policy of "unquestioning support for Israel."[27] The extent of the Arab defeat took

US officials by surprise. They had expected Israel to win but were unsure about the duration or immediate results of an Arab-Israeli contest. On the first day of the war, the uncertainty and uneasiness of the administration were reflected in its call for all combatants to work for a cease-fire and return to old positions before the start of hostilities.[28]

The US stand changed dramatically, however, as soon as the completeness of Israel's victory became known. In a memorandum to the president on June 7, his special assistant, Walt Rostow, wrote that the Israeli victory created new conditions that the US government quickly should move to exploit. The following day Rostow warned that the greatest risk would be to fail to appreciate the political consequences of Israel's military triumph. He summarized the US official position as being opposed to any UN resolution that would require Israel to concede war gains except in return for an Arab-Israeli final settlement.[29] No doubt Rostow was fully aware that the new bargaining situation created by the war was asymmetrical.

The Johnson administration hoped to use the new asymmetrical situation to extract peace treaties and recognition of Israel's existence from the Arabs. Some US officials argued that the humiliating defeat of Egypt and Syria provided the United States with a golden opportunity to take "big" political measures in the region, since "Soviet policy was in ruins."[30] Even before the war was over the administration had concluded that Nasser's fate was sealed. US diplomats in the field were certain that a general anti-Nasser convulsion would shake Egypt and the Arab world, and indeed that the domestic survival of his regime was in doubt, as was the allegiance of other Arab states.[31]

US intelligence agencies also believed that the Egyptian leader's days were numbered, and they began to think seriously about the post-Nasser era. Likewise, the US Department of State thought that the fall of Nasser's regime would lead not only to the reestablishment of US relations with Egypt but also to the resurrection of US interests in the whole Arab arena.[32] The dominant view in Washington was that no quick palliative solutions or temporizing compromises should be accepted. In the words of the undersecretary of state for political affairs, Averell Harriman, the United States would never have another opportunity as propitious to deal with the underlying problems besetting this turbulent region "so vital to our own and Western Europe's security."[33] Ironically, Nasser interpreted the US position as motivated by a desire to freeze the present situation, hoping that his regime, along with all revolutionary Arab regimes, "would fall, to be replaced by another more receptive to U.S. interests, or alternatively to instill utter despair in us, driving us to make peace with Israel on its conditions."[34]

The basic outlines of US long-term strategy were defined as follows: (1) cessation of hostilities between Israel and its Arab neighbors; (2) Arab recognition of Israel; (3) support of moderate Arab forces—the leader of which was Saudi Arabia—at the expense of the Arab radicals: Egypt, Syria, and Iraq; (4) a bigger role for Turkey and Iran in the Middle East; (5) regional arms control arrangements; and (6) a new mechanism for social and economic development.[35] In the eyes of the US, the denouement of the war provided a great opportunity to solve the festering Arab-Israeli conflict and to redraw the political map of the region. A central element of this strategy was cutting Nasser's prestige and influence in the Arab world and revising regional political alignments.

Achievement of this objective would require the active involvement of Turkey, Iran, and Israel. For a decade these states had campaigned hard to become integral players in the inter-Arab state subsystem. According to an intelligence assessment by the CIA, before the war Israel had hoped to construct a loose coalition of Iran, Turkey, Iraqi and Syrian Kurds, and moderate Arabs. It follows that the primary Israeli war aim was the destruction of Nasser as the leader of the pan-Arab nationalist movement. If that goal could be achieved, Israeli officials assumed that Israel, Turkey, and Iran would become the dominant regional actors by representing an overwhelming balance of military power.[36]

In the aftermath of the war, both Israel and Iran lobbied the US government to support more substantial roles for them in the area. Israeli officials informed their US counterparts that their victory over the Arabs created new opportunities to build a more viable order in the Middle East. They argued further that the United States and its regional allies would be the main beneficiaries of this order.[37] The shah of Iran also informed the Johnson administration that "Nasser must be eliminated as otherwise he [could] again inflame Arab sentiments." Iran would be more than pleased, he added, to play a more active part and to be a solid pillar in the region, as Japan was in the Far East.[38] (Indeed, some time later, the Nixon Doctrine of 1969 envisaged hegemonic roles for Iran in the Gulf and Israel in the Fertile Crescent. President Richard M. Nixon and his assistant for national security, Henry Kissinger, saw Iran and Israel as the policemen and the protectors of US interests in the region.[39])

These arguments impressed the Johnson administration, which accepted Tel Aviv's view that no withdrawal should take place except in return for a peace agreement. Johnson placed the major responsibility for the war on Egypt and refused to pressure Israel to concede any territories, as Eisenhower did in 1957. He said Israel must be accepted as a reality in the area and must be recognized by the Arabs.[40] Johnson spelled out five principles that were essential to peace: (1) the recognized right to national life (for all parties to the dispute); (2) justice for the (Palestinian) refugees; (3) innocent maritime passage (through the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tiran); (4) limiting the arms race (in the region between Arabs and Israelis); and (5) political independence and territorial integrity (for all). Both the Israelis and the Arabs saw Johnson's Five Great Principles of Peace as wholly supporting Israel. The convergence of interests between the United States and Israel was almost complete, marking the beginning of a special relationship between the two countries.[41] Thus, the Six-Day War brought about a major shift in US policy toward the Middle East.[42] The president and his aides decided not to return to the old failed policy supporting the 1949 armistice regime. This attitude explained the administration's posture of distant reserve toward the question of Arab-Israeli peace.[43]

THE ARAB VIEW OF THE SOVIET ROLE

Given their perceptions of an unholy US-Israeli alliance, the Arab confrontation states—Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, with the exception of Jordan—felt compelled to turn to the Soviet Union for political and military support. They recognized, however, the limited nature of Soviet power and influence.[44] The Soviet failure to provide direct military assistance to the Arabs had important repercussions on Soviet-Arab relations. Egyptian, Iraqi, and Algerian leaders were disappointed with the lack of tangible Soviet assistance. They suspected the Soviets of either being "scared of the Americans" or having sacrificed their Arab allies on the altar of détente with Washington. Egyptian officials criticized the Soviet Union for actually playing the role demanded of it by Johnson during the crisis in May and June; some senior Egyptian officials were skeptical about the value of Moscow as a friend, whereas others even suspected a collusion between the United States and the Soviet Union. Arab rulers realized that the security requirements of their superpower ally vis-à-vis the United States took priority over Middle East regional concerns.[45]

This realization convinced the Arabs that their alliance with the Soviet Union was tactical rather than strategic. In this context, the Six-Day War marked a watershed in Arab-Soviet relations. The Arabs questioned the nature of their alliance with the Kremlin; though Israel enjoyed full protection by the United States, the Arabs did not receive an equal Soviet commitment.[46] It could be argued that one of the main reasons for the decline of Soviet influence in the Arab world in the early 1970s lay in Arab perceptions of Moscow's stand during the war.

Yet despite the feeling of abandonment and indignation, Nasser and the other Arab nationalists could not afford a final divorce from the Communist giant—especially after they cut their political links with the United States and Great Britain. The Soviet Union became their last refuge. Nasser believed that the regional and global configuration of forces were in US and Israeli favor, thus he needed Soviet military and political support to rebuild his military and to counterbalance US and Israeli hegemony. Immediately after the war Nasser moved swiftly to end the ill feeling that was souring Arab-Soviet relations. Nasser publicly praised Kremlin leaders for their political, economic, and military assistance. He informed Soviet officials that he wanted to strengthen and deepen Egyptian-Soviet relations and that he was ready to sign any pact to organize and structure the relationship between their two countries on a more permanent basis.[47] Moscow's deepening involvement with Egypt and Syria took the Arab-Israeli conflict still deeper into the Cold War rivalry between the superpowers. The Arab-Israeli dispute became a global military-strategic problem, not a regional political problem.[48] The peace process thus became entangled in the web of great power politics.

To the Soviets, the immediate results of the war must have been gratifying. Nasser's crushing defeat humbled him, and he became more receptive to Soviet requests. No longer could he afford to challenge Moscow's influence in the region, as he had in 1959; this reassured the Soviets. By regulating the flow of arms to Egypt and Syria, the Kremlin would have a greater impact on their policies. Nasser was left in no doubt as to Moscow's preference for a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.[49] Time and again, the Soviets would procrastinate and decline to supply their Arab friends with offensive weapons. The war had taught the Soviets that they needed to exercise more control over their regional allies, and the war's aftermath enabled them to do so. In the next three years the question of arms deliveries became one of the most effective clubs the Soviets wielded over the Arabs.[50]

The Egyptians were frustrated with their treatment by the Kremlin. In fact, Anwar Sadat described the period after the war as a clash between Egypt and the Soviet Union.[51] In the long run, Soviet behavior bred suspicion and bitterness in Arab ranks, especially in Egypt. Sadat claimed that one of the reasons motivating Nasser to accept the 1970 Rogers Initiative—a peace initiative by US secretary of state William Rogers—was Nasser's belief that the Soviet Union was a "hopeless case."[52] Hence, it was a only matter of time before the Egyptians would rebel against what they perceived to be Soviet heavy-handedness.

In the short term, Soviet political and material influence increased considerably in the Arab world. Soviet leaders kept their promise to restore lost Arab inventories, with the exception of offensive weapons. Soviet military personnel also were sent in increasing numbers to Cairo and Damascus to assist in defense of deep strategic and industrial targets. However, the flourishing Soviet presence in the region was tactical and temporary, the product of a devastating upheaval that left Egypt, the nerve center of the Arab order, with few international options to pursue. The Arabs could not help comparing US support of Israel with the Kremlin's lukewarm commitment to the Arabs. Thus, the seeds of mistrust and suspicion had been sown in Arab-Soviet relations. Although Nasser could not distance himself from his Soviet ally, he eventually reopened his relationship with the United States, and by the time of his death from natural causes in 1970 he had come to recognize the indispensable role of Washington in the peace process. Sadat claimed that Nasser had told him that "whether we like it or not, all the cards of this game [i.e., the Arab-Israeli conflict] are in America's hands. It's high time we talked and allowed the U.S.A. to take part in this."[53]

Although Sadat's account is exaggerated and self-serving, it is also important, as it foreshadows the future direction of US-Egyptian relations. More than once Nasser tested the degree of US commitment to a balanced approach to the Middle East crisis. For example, following Richard Nixon's election to the presidency in 1968, Nasser decided to make a fresh start with the United States by initiating a dialogue with the new US leader. In fact, Nasser and Jordan's King Hussein informed Nixon that they were prepared to accept a diplomatic solution with Israel and that they were constrained neither by Syria's opposition nor by opposition from other Arab radicals. Egyptian prime minister Mahmoud Fawzi also told Nixon privately that as part of a regional settlement Israel would have freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal. The Egyptians hoped that the Nixon administration would reciprocate by adopting evenhanded policies toward the Arabs and the Israelis. They were disappointed, however, with the lack of a positive US response. According to scholar William Quandt, Kissinger was not persuaded. Thus, the Nixon administration did not change its attitude and maintained close ties with Israel by preserving Israel's military superiority over Arab neighbors without pressing its leaders to withdraw from recently occupied Arab territories.[54]

Nasser still thought that Nixon—unlike Johnson—could play a positive role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In May 1970, the Egyptian leader personally appealed to Nixon to adopt an evenhanded policy and become actively engaged in the quest for peace. He said Egypt had not given up on the United States, despite US military and political support to Israel: the United States must either order Israel to withdraw from the recently occupied territories or, if it was unable to go that far, refrain from extending any further assistance to Israel as long as the latter occupied Arab lands. Although Egypt and the United States did not have diplomatic relations, Nasser said this did not prevent the two countries from cooperating to achieve peace.[55] According to Sadat, this appeal to Nixon implied a desire on Nasser's part to pursue a political course of action.[56] Although Nixon responded to the appeal, and Rogers in fact outlined a peace initiative, Nasser and the United States could not overcome differences. It would take Nasser's successor (ironically, that turned out to be Sadat) and other new leaders to revive the old connection with the United States—at the sole expense of the Kremlin.

THE KHARTOUM SUMMIT

Nasser accepted the convening of a summit of Arab heads of state in Khartoum, Sudan, at the end of August 1967. The Arab militants—Syria, Iraq, Algeria, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—felt that a counteroffensive was urgently needed to stem the tide of US advance in the region. In their view, the termination of diplomatic relations with the United States was not adequate to force it to change its policy. Thus, the Syrians, Algerians, Iraqis, and Palestinians called for a complete boycott of the United States and for a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union. They argued that the peace process would lead to Arab surrender and a US-Israeli dictate. On the regional level, they advanced the idea of a popular war against Israel and of a revolutionary crusade against the conservative Arab regimes. The Syrian rulers, in particular, took an anti-Western posture and poured abuse on reactionary Arab regimes that had remained on the sidelines during the latest round of Arab-Israeli hostilities. Syria boycotted the Khartoum summit because it refused to accept the Arab reactionary states as partners.[57]

However, the clarification of the Soviet position played a decisive role in Nasser's decision to accept the convening of the summit. Its purpose was to define a collective Arab strategy toward Israel and the West. In Khartoum, Nasser joined the Arab moderates in supporting a political rather than military solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. They also agreed to keep the dialogue with the West, and they opposed the militants' proposal to suspend Arab oil production.[58] An oil embargo, Nasser argued, would harm Arab economies more than those of the West and would almost certainly antagonize the West. Nasser's new realism manifested itself in his unwillingness to ask the conservative Arab regimes to sever diplomatic relations with the US government. He also informed Jordan's King Hussein that he was free to pursue a separate negotiated settlement—including signing a defense treaty with the United States—to recover the West Bank and Jerusalem.[59]

Nasser's behavior was designed not only to mend his fences with the Arab conservatives but also to keep open lines of communication with the United States. He said he wanted to give the United States an opportunity to prove to its few remaining Arab friends that it was serious about reducing its total alignment with Israel. Nasser was not convinced by the arguments of the militants to cut all links with Washington. The war and its aftermath made the Egyptian leader acutely aware of the influential weight of the United States in the region. As Nasser himself put it, "Political positions cannot be built on myths but facts. We do not want [to] and cannot fight America." Thus, the Egyptian leader asked Saudi King Faisal to serve as his channel of communication with the Johnson administration.[60]

Nasser parted company with the Arab radicals on the Arab-Israeli conflict itself: he was not impressed by their call for a total war against the Jewish state. He knew full well that the regional balance of power favored Israel, which had won the sympathy and respect of world public opinion and a decisive edge in international diplomacy. Nasser also took into account the superpower agreement to resolve the problem by political means. Moreover, as mentioned previously, both the Soviet Union and the nonaligned movement informed the Arabs that they would prefer to see a peaceful way out of the Arab-Israeli labyrinth.[61]

For all these reasons, the Egyptian president joined the moderates in Khartoum in support of a political rather than military solution to the conflict. This fact should not be confused by the summit's three declarations on Israel—"no peace, no negotiations, no recognition." The Sudanese premier noted that the three noes were adopted as an instrumental response, a political gesture, to the uncompromising stand of the PLO. Afterward, Nasser, Hussein, and other Arab officials made it clear both publicly and privately that they were prepared to live in peace with Israel in return for Israel's complete withdrawal from Arab territories occupied in 1967 and for a just solution to the Palestine problem. The summit, noted Hussein, empowered Egypt and Jordan to seek a political solution. In particular, Hussein was convinced that a political solution was the only feasible option open to the Arabs. This belief led him to coordinate his efforts with the United States as well as to serve as a link between the United States and Egypt.[62]

It was in this spirit that Egypt and Jordan accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242, which was adopted unanimously by the major powers in November 1967. This resolution called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories—not "the" territories—occupied in the recent conflict and the termination of the state belligerency between Israel and its Arab neighbors.[63]

Nasser subsequently accused Johnson of supporting Israel in resisting the implementation of the terms of Resolution 242; instead the Johnson administration applied considerable political pressure in an attempt to force Egypt (and Jordan) into a separate peace settlement with Israel: the basis of any agreement with Egypt centered on total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Egyptian territories in return for Egypt terminating the state of war with Israel. Nasser refused to conclude a separate deal with Israel and called for a comprehensive solution: "The issue is not only about withdrawal from Sinai. It is much bigger than that. The issue is to be or not to be." To Nasser, accepting a separate agreement with Israel meant coming to terms with the reality of defeat and abandoning the core of the Arab policy upon which he had built his political career.[64]

The Egyptians were angered when Johnson started to develop intimate ties with Tel Aviv. They believed that Johnson's actions were not confined to safeguarding Israel but were also assisting it in its occupation of Arab lands. To Nasser and his colleagues, the US president was pushing Egypt to depend further upon the Soviet Union for military, economic, and political support. Egyptian foreign minister Mahmoud Riad said that Nasser felt puzzled by the element of self-destruction in US policy that was driving the Arabs into Soviet arms: "The United States leaves us no choice."[65] Egyptian leaders could not understand the radical change in the US position toward the peace process after the 1967 war, especially Johnson's abandonment of previous US support for the 1949 armistice regime. They believed that the US-Israeli drive aimed at "forcing Egypt to accept the fait accompli in the hope that the Arab area would surrender to U.S. and Israeli demands."[66]

This was another attempt by Johnson, asserted Nasser, to humiliate the Arabs, thus adversely affecting US-Arab relations. By the end of 1967, given Nasser's perception of Johnson's hostility, he had concluded that the peace process was dead as long as the balance of power favored Israel; it was only by correcting this imbalance that the United States would be induced to reassess its position. Nasser said that redressing the imbalance, and escalating military pressure, would have a radical impact on the whole Middle East situation, particularly on the positions of the superpowers, and would convince the superpowers of the need to stop maneuvering and to act decisively. Thus, Nasser's subsequent choice of a "war of attrition" can be seen as a result of the lack of progress toward a political settlement in the two years after the 1967 war and of his desire to break the political and military stalemate, something Anwar Sadat would do as well in 1973.[67]

CONCLUSION

Although the Six-Day War set the stage for the Middle East peace process, it did not motivate or force Israel and the Arabs to reach a compromise. Israel's overwhelming victory over the Arabs brought about a radical shift in the regional balance of power in its favor. This shift in the configuration of forces, coupled with the strong pro-Israeli position of the US government, hardened the positions of the two antagonists. Although most Arab rulers declared their readiness to live in peace with their Jewish neighbor, none of the Arab confrontational states—except for Jordan—was willing to conclude formal peace treaties with Israel. They were very weak militarily for any risky initiative on the diplomatic front. For Nasser and his Arab counterparts, to give the sort of commitments the United States and Israel were demanding would have meant accepting the reality of defeat, thus endangering the very survival of their regimes. Furthermore, despite their rude awakening in June 1967, Arab leaders were not yet ready to come to terms with Israel; they were still prisoners of their historical fears and prejudices.

Israel, on the other hand, was a satisfied power. As a result of their swift victory over the Arabs, Israeli officials demanded a high price for their withdrawal from some, but not all, of the recently occupied Arab territories. Given the disarray, fragmentation, and impotence of the Arab world and unwavering US support, some Israeli elements believed that they could indefinitely hold on to the occupied Arab territories. By the time UN Resolution 242 was passed, Israel was no longer interested in exchanging land for commitments of any kind from the Arabs. As the then deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, Rodger Davies, put it: "Israel's appetite had grown with the eating."[68]

The diplomatic stalemate in the Middle East was directly related to the deepening polarization of the Arab-Israeli conflict along East-West lines. As mentioned previously, Arab nationalist perceptions of US involvement in the 1967 war influenced their attitudes toward the US role in the peace process. They believed that the Johnson administration had colluded with Israel against the forces of Arab nationalism. Subsequent US abandonment of its previous support for the 1949 armistice regime reinforced the widely held Arab view of US hostility.

As a result, Arab nationalists did not trust the United States to act as a neutral mediator in the quest for peace; they turned instead to the Soviet Union for political and military succor—despite their recognition of the limited nature of Soviet power—hoping to redress the regional imbalance. Moscow's further involvement with Egypt and Syria took the Middle East crisis still deeper into the Cold War rivalry between the superpowers. The entanglement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the web of great power politics complicated the peace process and made Israel and the Arabs less willing to compromise. Thus, far from being a catalyst for peace, the 1967 war sowed the seeds of yet another bloody conflagration in the region.

Notes

I want to thank former ambassador Richard Parker, Professor William Quandt, Dr. Avi Shlaim, and Professor Chris Taylor for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this chapter.

1. William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution and University of California Press, 1993), 1.

2. *Wataiq 'Abdel-Nasser: Khutab, ahadit, tasrihat: Yanayir 1967–Disember 1968* [Abdel-Nasser's documents: Speeches, discussions, and declarations, January 1967–December 1968] (Cairo: Markaz al-dirasat al-siyasiya wa al-istratijiya bi Al-Ahram, 1973), 246 (hereinafter *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968*). Shortly after the war, Nasser told his colleague Vice President Zakaria Muhieddin that Johnson was determined to get rid of Nasser. See Tharwat Akasha, *Mudhakkirati fi al-siyasa wa al-thaqafa* [My memoirs in politics and in culture] (Cairo: Maktaba al-madbuli, 1988), 2:490, 501–502.

3. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 226; Mahmoud Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East* (London: Quartet Books, 1981), 36–37; Mohamed Heikal, *1967: Sanawat al-galayan, Harb al-talateen sana* [1967: The years of upheaval, the Thirty Years' War], (Cairo: Markaz Al-Ahram litarjama wa al-nashr, 1988), 1:846.

4. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 226; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 36–37; Heikal, *1967: Sanawat al-galayan,* 846; Mohamed Heikal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents* (London: New English Library, 1972), 219.

5. H. M. King Hussein, *Harbuna ma'a Israil* [Our war with Israel] (Beirut: Dar al-nahar lilnashr, 1968), 67–69.

6. Beginning in 1965, Johnson had applied economic pressure against Nasser by reducing the flow of foreign aid to Egypt. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 226, 243–248; Lieutenant General

Salah al-Din al-Hadidi, *Shahid ila harb sab'a wa sitteen* [Witness to the 1967 war] (Cairo: Maktaba al-madbuli, 1974), 180. Diya al-Din Baybars, *Al-asrar al-sakhsiya li 'Abd al-Nasser* [The personal secrets of Nasser as told by Mahmoud al-Jayar] (Cairo: Maktaba al-madbuli, 1976), 165; Ahmed Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio: Karif 'Abd al-Nasser* [The story of the 23 July revolution: The autumn of 'Abd al-Nasser] (Cairo: Maktaba al-madbuli, 1984), 5:138–139, 141; Mahmoud Riad, *Mudhakkirat: America wa al-'arab* [Memoirs: America and the Arabs] (Beirut: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi, 1986), 3:40–42; Mohamed Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar, Harb al-talateen sana'* [1967: The explosion, the Thirty Years' War] (Cairo: Markaz Al-Ahram liltarjama wa al-nashr, 1990), 3:756, 846, 876.

7. Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 25.

8. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 336; Abdel Meguid Farid, *Min muhadarat ijtima'at 'Abd al-Nasser al-'arabiya was duwaliya* [From the minutes of 'Abd al-Nasser's Arab and international meetings, 1967–1970] (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-abhat al-'arabiya, 1979), 120–121; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:82–83; Ahmed Youssef Ahmed, *Al-dawr al-Misri fi al-Yaman, 1962–1967* [The Egyptian role in Yemen, 1962–1967] (Cairo: Al-Hai'a al-Misriya al-amma ilkitab, 1981), 319.

9. US Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: US-U.A.R. Relations, 17 September 1965, in *The Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, the Middle East: National Security Files, 1963–1969* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1989) (hereinafter *LBJ Files*), reel 8 of 8.

10. Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 16; Tom Little, *Modern Egypt* (London: Ernest Benn, 1967), 231; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:83–84, 94; Mohamed Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World* (London: Collins, 1978), 161–162, 165–167.

11. Hal Saunders, Recommend Clearing Cable from Hare to Battle with Added Final Sentence, 4 June 1966, in *LBJ Files,* reel 8 of 8.

12. Cairo to Secretary of State, No. 3062, 25 May 1966 [sections one and two of two], in *LBJ Files,* reel 8 of 8.

13. Mohammed Fawzi, *Harb october am 1973: Dirasa was durus* [The October war of 1973: A study and lessons] (Beirut: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'arabi, 1988), 5; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 27; Mohamed Hafez Ismael, *Amin Misr al-quami fi asr al-tahadiyat* [Egyptian national security in the challenging age] (Cairo: Markaz Al-Ahram lilnashr, 1987), 125.

14. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 495; Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 914, 933; Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan: The Inside Story of How the Arabs Prepared For and Almost Won the October War of 1973* (India: Natraj Publishers, 1981), 47; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 76–77.

15. Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 25, 37, 39. Riad, *Mudhakkirat,* 3:45.

16. Robert Stephens, *Nasser: A Political Biography* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1971), 521; Richard Parker, "The June War: Whose Conspiracy?" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 4 (Summer 1992): 15–17; Abdel-Latif A. Baghdadi, *Mudhakirat* [Memoirs] (Cairo: Al-maktab al-Misri al-hadit, 1977), 2:277.

17. Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 725, 733, 895; Baghdadi, *Mudhakirat* [Memoirs], 2:275–276.

18. Draft Message to Chairman Kosygin, 8 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8; Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963–1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 298.

19. Memorandum for Mr. Rostow: The Security Council Meeting of 6 and 7 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

20. The states of Eastern Europe, with the exception of Romania, also broke off diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv. *Pravda,* 10 June 1967; Johnson, *The Vantage Point,* 302; Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 304; Abba Eban, *An Autobiography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 423.

21. Johnson, *The Vantage Point,* 302.

22. The weight of evidence indicates that Washington turned a blind eye toward Israel's offensive campaign against Syria. Israel's foreign minister at the time, Abba Eban, noted that some US officials informed him that Syria should not be allowed to escape injury. On June 8 these officials were worried lest the UN Security Council adopt a cease-fire resolution, thus leaving Syria off the hook. During the debate on whether to storm the Golan Heights, Eban told the Israeli cabinet that Washington would be delighted if Syria were beaten. Declassified US documents also show that US officials hoped that Israel would "go fast enough" to create a "de facto" situation on the Syrian front before the UN Security Council passed a cease-fire resolution. The USS *Liberty* incident, however, indicates that the Johnson administration did not sanction Israel's attack on Syria. We still do not know the whole story behind Israel's attack on this US-flagged intelligence-gathering ship in the eastern Mediterranean, which killed thirty-four men, although some believe it was a deliberate attempt by Israel to keep Washington in the dark as to its intentions vis-à-vis the Golan Heights rather than an accident, as the Israelis claim. The recently declassified US documents do not provide any critical insights as to Israel's motives. For evidence on the US stand toward the Golan issue, see Walt Rostow to President, 6 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8. See also Eban, *An Autobiography,* 421–422; William B. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967–1976* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 63; Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 151; Dayan, *Story of My Life,* 304.

23. US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Memorandum for Walt W. Rostow, Subject: Objectives of the Middle East Combatants and the USSR, 6 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

24. *Majmu'at Khutab wa tasrihat wa bayanat al-ra'is Gamal Abdel-Nasser, 23 Yulio 1952–1958* [The collected speeches, declarations, and statements of President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, 23 July 1952–1958] (Cairo: Hai'a al ist'lamat, n.d.), 1:617; *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 226, 243–248; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 37; Sa'id Mar'iy, *Awraq siyasiya: Min'azma Mars ila al-naksa* [Political papers: From the March crisis to the disaster] (Cairo: Al-maktab al-Misri al-hadit, 1978), 362; Salah Nasr, *Abdel-Nasser wa tajriba al-wahda* [Nasser and the unity experience] (Cairo: Al-watan al-'arabi, 1976), 1:281; Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 846; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 72.

25. During his first meeting with King Hussein after the war, President Johnson informed his guest that he was "angry" with Egypt. H. M. King Hussein, *Mahammati kamalik* [My profession as king] (Jordan: Al-sirka al-'arabiya iltiba'a wa nashr, 1978), 221. See also Hussein, *Harbuna ma'a Israil,* 95; Johnson, *The Vantage Point,* 303; Quandt, *Peace Process,* 51, 54, 62; and Stephens, *Nasser: A Political Biography,* 522.

26. Richard B. Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation in the Middle East* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 121.

27. Quandt, *Peace Process,* 61; Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation,* 129; Robert Stookey, *America and the Arab States: An Uneasy Encounter* (London: John Wiley, 1975), 217.

28. Harriman to the President and Secretary of State, No. 19914, 6 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

29. Walt Rostow to the President, No. 299, 7 June 1967; and Department of State to Embassy Paris, No. 209550, 8 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

30. Department of State to Embassy Tehran, Subject: Middle East Crisis, No. 209086, 7 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

31. Cairo to Secretary of State, No. 3292, 7 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

32. Ibid. CIA, Memorandum for Walt W. Rostow, 6 June 1967; and Department of State, Subject: Middle East Crisis, Embassy Tehran, No. 209086, 7 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

33. Harriman to the President, No. 6577, 8 June 1967; and Department of State to Embassy London, No. 208887, 7 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

34. Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 83; Riad, *Mudhakkirat,* 3:73; *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 306; Amin Huweidi, *Hurub Abdel-Nasser* [ʻAbd al-Nasser's wars] (Cairo: Dar al-mauqif al-'arabi, 1982), 149.

35. Walt Rostow to the President, No. 299, 7 June 1967; Department of State to Embassy London, No. 208887, 7 June 1967; and NSC Memorandum for Walt Rostow, Subject: Reactions to Your Paper of 7 June 1967, 8 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

36. Richard Helms, CIA, to Walt Rostow, Subject: Israeli Objectives in the Current Crisis—Soviet Policy Miscalculation, 6 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

37. Embassy Tel Aviv to Secretary of State, No. 3998, 7 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

38. Department of State to Embassy Tehran, Subject: Middle East Crisis, No. 209086, 7 June 1967; and Harriman to the President, No. 6577, 8 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8.

39. Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 1262; George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 116–140; Quandt, *Decade of Decisions,* 9.

40. Johnson, *The Vantage Point,* 303–304; and Quandt, *Peace Process,* 55.

41. David Kimche and Dan Bawly, *The Sandstorm, the Arab-Israeli War of June 1967: Prelude and Aftermath* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), 279, 281; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 39, 55; Quandt, *Decade of Decisions,* 64.

42. Strong US support of Israel in the post–Nixon Doctrine and post–Jordanian civil war period was not as big a shift in US foreign policy as was popularly thought. All that Nixon did was to carry further the change in US policy toward Israel that was inaugurated by Johnson after the 1967 war.

43. NSC, Memorandum for Walt Rostow, 8 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8; Quandt, *Peace Process,* 54, 57.

44. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 221, 226, 242–243; Baghdadi, *Mudhakirat* [Memoirs], 274–275, 298–299.

45. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 221, 226, 242–243; Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 754; Cairo to Secretary of State, No. 3292, 7 June 1967, and Soviet Objectives in the Middle East, No. 41, 2 January 1968, in *LBJ Files,* reels 1 and 7 of 8, respectively; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 29–30, 36–37; Riad, *Mudhakkirat,* 2:46; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:126–163, 188–189; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 181; Stephens, *Nasser: A Political Biography,* 511.

46. Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (London: Collins, 1978), 172–173; Munir Hafez, "Al-tarik al-sirri lihukm Gamal Abdel-Nasser," *Rose al-Yusif,* No. 2498, 26 April 1976, 22–23; Baghdadi, *Mudhakirat* [Memoirs], 2: 298; Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Egypt: Military Society, the Army Regime, the Left, and Social Change Under Nasser,* trans. Charles Markmann (New York: Random House, 1968), viii; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 191; Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 773, 916–918; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:186.

47. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 261, 268; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 42–45; Farid, *Min muhadarat,* 29–30, 34, 41; Fawzi, *Harb october am 1973,* 189, 194–195; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 193; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:186.

48. Stookey, *America and the Arab States,* 215.

49. Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 49–50, 84; Farid, *Min muhadarat,* 40, 52, 54–61; Fawzi, *Harb october am 1973,* 346; Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 788, 914; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 185–188; Huweidi, *Hurub Abdel-Nasser,* 150; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:288.

50. Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 896, 912–913, 936; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 195; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 48; Sadat, *In Search of Identity,* 181, 196.

51. Sadat, *In Search of Identity,* 187, 197; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 193–194.

52. Sadat, *In Search of Identity,* 199. The Rogers Initiative was a limited diplomatic initiative designed to convince the Israelis and Egyptians to "stop shooting" and "start talking." The US-proposed cease-fire went into effect in August 1970.

53. Ibid., 198.

54. *Wataiq Nasser: Khutab, ahadit, tasrihat: Yanayir 1969–Siptember 1970* [Nasser's documents: Speeches, discussions, and declarations, January 1969–September 1970] (Cairo: Markaz al-dirasat al-siyasiya wa al-istratijiya bi Al-Ahram, 1973), 303 (hereinafter *Wataiq Nasser, 1969–1970)*; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 94, 96; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 198; Quandt, *Peace Process,* 77.

55. *Wataiq Nasser, 1969–1970,* 371–372.

56. Sadat, *In Search of Identity,* 198.

57. T. Petran, *Syria* (London: Ernest Benn, 1972), 201. Syrian rulers were silent, however, about their own procrastination and passivity during the first two days of fighting and about their slow response to Egyptian and Jordanian urgent appeals for help. On June 6, in its report on the military situation on the Israeli-Jordanian front, the US embassy in Jordan made note of Syria's poor response—the "bare minimum to help out since [the] beginning of the conflict." See Amman to Department of State, No. 4098, 6 June 1967, in *LBJ Files,* reel 1 of 8. This stand should be measured against the fact that since the early 1960s, Damascus had been pushing the Arab world toward an armed confrontation with Israel. The behavior of the Syrian leaders, writes Patrick Seale, could be explained by the scale and speed of the war, which caught them off-balance; they were mentally unprepared for Israel's all-out, highly mobile blitzkrieg. Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988), 138–139, 144; Majid Khadduri, *Republican Iraq: A Study of Iraqi Politics Since the Revolution of 1958* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 291; Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: KPI, 1987), 100; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:202; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 55; Stephens, *Nasser: A Political Biography,* 521.

58. Farid, *Min muhadarat,* 81; Hussein, *Harbuna,* 97; Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 932, 935; Stookey, *America and the Arab States,* 213.

59. Hussein insisted, however, on a collective Arab strategy toward the question of peace with Israel. Riad, *Mudhakkirat,* 3:47–48; Hussein, *Mahammati kamalik,* 228.

60. A few months earlier Nasser had asked his prime minister to discuss with US officials the possibility of a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The head of the Egyptian intelligence was also told to maintain contacts with the CIA. In November 1967, Nasser publicly declared that Egypt was talking to the United States because "we could not let anger determine our policy." *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 248, 288; Farid, *Min muhadarat,* 98; Riad, *Mudhakkirat,* 50; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:288–289, 342–343.

61. Mohamed Ahmed Mahgoub, *Democracy on Trial: Reflections on Arab and African Affairs* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1974), 145; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 54.

62. Mahgoub, *Democracy on Trial,* 146; United Arab Republic, No. 41, 2 January 1968, in *LBJ Files,* reel 7 of 8; *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 289–290; Hussein, *Harbuna,* 97; *Majmu'at khutab al-malik Hussein: 25 'ammn min al-tarikh, 1952–1977* [The collected speeches of King Hussein: 25 years of history, 1952–1977] (London: Samir Mutawi's Company for Publication, 1978), 1:662; Wasfi Tal, *Kitabat fi al-qadaya al-'arabiya* [Writings on Arab issues] (Jordan: Dar

al-liwa lisihafa wa nashr, 1980), 486; Saad Abu Wardiya, *'Amaliya itiakad al-qarar fi siyasa al-Urdunn al-kharijiya* [The making of Jordan's foreign policy] (Jordan: Daira al-taqafa wa al-funun, 1983), 251; Peter Snow, *Hussein: A Biography* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972), 198, 251; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 38, 53–56; Farid, *Min muhadarat,* 92; Hamroush, *Qissa taura 23 Yulio,* 5:235, 244; Stephens, *Nasser: A Political Biography,* 523.

63. Although the French text included the definite article, its absence from the English text was partly to preserve ambiguity and partly a product of US pressure in the United Nations. The removal of the definite article affected later interpretations of UN Resolution 242, especially by the Israelis.

64. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 429, 481, 590; *Wataiq Nasser, 1969–1970,* 301; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 91–92; Riad, *Mudhakkirat,* 76, 80, 94, 103; Mohammed Fawzi, *Mudhakkirat al-Fariq awwal Mohammed Fawzi: Harb al-talat sanawat, 1967–1970* [Memoirs of Chief of Staff Mohammed Fawzi: The three years' war, 1967–1970] (Damascus: Tlasdar, 1986), 202; Huweidi, *Hurub Abdel-Nasser,* 152.

65. Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 25, 38, 77; Fawzi, *Harb al-talat sanawat,* 192; Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 887.

66. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 498; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 39.

67. As a result of the stalemate in the diplomatic arena, the situation deteriorated significantly in the Middle East in spring 1969. Fighting erupted along the Suez Canal, and in April Nasser announced the abrogation of the cease-fire, signaling the onset of the War of Attrition, which lasted until the Rogers Initiative cease-fire in August 1970. *Wataiq Nasser, 1967–1968,* 289–290; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East,* 75, 77–78, 88, 101; Huweidi, *Hurub Abdel-Nasser,* 147; Heikal, *1967: Al-infijar,* 937; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar,* 191–192; Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan,* 56; Stephens, *Nasser: A Political Biography,* 518.

68. Cited in Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation in the Middle East,* 128.

CHAPTER 10

THE GOLAN NEGOTIATIONS

US-Syrian Relations and the Failure to Achieve a Comprehensive Peace

Andrew Bowen

The post-1967 political order in the Middle East was tested in both Egypt's War of Attrition against Israel up to 1970 and in the Jordanian crisis of 1970 but was further unsettled by the shift in Arab politics under the leaderships of Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt and Hafiz al-Asad of Syria. Both Sadat and Asad, men from military backgrounds whose training and experiences were forged in the postcolonial experience in the modern Middle East, sought to reposition their states after the tumultuous politics of the 1960s and pursue their states' interests in the Middle East with more pragmatism.

In Nixon and Kissinger's calculation the regional security architecture, albeit stressed by the crisis in Jordan in 1970, was mostly stable, even if it was not ideal. Nixon was aware that a dual tension existed between the domestic and strategic contingencies of supporting Israel and the need to build stronger relations with the Arab world.[1] Despite Kissinger's discomfort with Secretary of State William Rogers's first-term engagement in peace initiatives, Nixon supported Rogers's efforts to secure a settlement with Israel and its neighbors along the lines of UN Security Council Resolution 242.[2] Kissinger expressed concern that Rogers's initiative, which focused on securing a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict at an international conference, was counterproductive to American interests and Israeli security. Kissinger believed that step-by-step diplomacy would allow the United States to both have conceptual control over the process and exclude the Soviet Union. Despite Rogers's efforts, his initiatives failed to secure a comprehensive agreement.[3]

After the crisis of 1970 and the expulsion of Soviet advisers from Egypt in July 1972, Nixon entrusted Kissinger with the management of the United States' Middle East policy. Using back-channel communications between the White House and Middle Eastern governments to bypass the State Department (and William Rogers), Kissinger launched an engagement focused primarily on Egypt and Jordan. The positive reception Kissinger received from Sadat raised Nixon's hopes that a potential breakthrough with Egypt could lead to a wider peace settlement and remove the Soviet Union from the Arab-Israeli conflict. These secret negotiations failed to produce a successful outcome, however, with Israel refusing to make concessions on the Sinai. Kissinger concluded that any negotiations on the Sinai could not be successful until after the Israeli elections in October 1973.[4] With diplomacy not producing any substantive results, Sadat secretly began to plan war with Israel. When Egypt and Syria launched their attack on Israel in October 1973, the United States was caught completely off guard.[5]

NIXON AND KISSINGER'S APPROACH: NEW CIRCUMSTANCES, OLD STRATEGY, NEW TACTICS

The October War shattered the United States' assumptions about the durability of the regional order. New conditions emerged, raising the urgency for Nixon and Kissinger to take a more proactive role.[6] First, the war brought détente to a boiling point, with the United States going to its highest state of nuclear alert since the Cuban missile crisis and the Soviet Union threatening to intervene in Egypt.[7] Even though neither state had had any substantial advance warning, both superpowers believed that the other had had a hand in planning the war.[8] In an effort to bring an end to the conflict with Soviet backing, Nixon and Kissinger sponsored with Moscow joint UN Resolution 338, which committed both superpowers to work for a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This resolution gave the Soviet Union a seat at the postwar negotiating table. Moscow pushed for the resolution to support the pre-1967 borders as the basis for future negotiations, but Kissinger successfully maneuvered to remove this wording from the document.[9]

Second, America's relations with Israel strengthened during the war even though Nixon was profoundly distrustful of Israel and its motives. The surprise attack by Egypt and Syria along both of Israel's fronts shattered the American assumption that the balance of power in the region deterred aggression by Egypt and Syria.[10] Caught by surprise, Israel initially suffered significant losses—well beyond American estimates of a potential war between Israel and its neighbors.[11] The United States airlifted military supplies to Israel on the nineteenth of October, at the height of the war. This underscored how, despite Israel's victories in 1948 and 1967, it was still vulnerable.[12] Even though Israel reclaimed its territorial losses, this strategic vulnerability raised the costs of instability in the region.

Third, the oil embargo led by Saudi Arabia and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in response to America's material support to Israel introduced significant economic pressures on the United States and marked the first time the Arab world challenged the United States with its own means and on its own terms. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia decided to impose this embargo when the US supplied Israel with military provisions, helping Israel reverse its initial territorial losses. OPEC's refusal to lift the embargo until agreements were brokered between Israel and its neighbors created new urgency for the United States to address the region's broken security architecture.[13] Finally, with the Watergate scandal worsening by the day, Nixon considered foreign policy the one area of his presidency where he could underline the importance of his administration to the American public and create a legacy.[14]

On October 20, 1973, President Nixon addressed this changing regional environment in a telegram to Kissinger: "I believe that, beyond a doubt, we are now facing the best opportunity we have had in 15 years to build a lasting peace in the Middle East. I am convinced that history will hold us responsible if we let this opportunity slip by." Outlining the reasons why the peace initiatives failed during his first term, Nixon included "A) The intransigence of the Israelis; B) The unwillingness of the Arabs to engage themselves in discussions on a realistic basis; [and] C) Our preoccupation with other initiatives, preventing us from devoting the time required to the issue."[15]

Instructing Kissinger to make this diplomatic initiative his predominant focus as secretary of state, Nixon said, "I now consider a permanent Middle East settlement to be the most important goal to which we must devote ourselves." Acknowledging the salient role of identity in America's foreign policy, he stressed, "U.S. political considerations will absolutely have no, repeat no, influence whatever on our discussions in this regard. I want you to know that I am prepared to pressure the Israelis to the extent required, regardless of the political consequences."[16]

The urgency to secure a peace settlement created a rare space for Nixon and Kissinger to consider engaging Syria, a state they had previously sought to contain during the Jordanian crisis of 1970. As Kissinger writes in his memoir, *Years of Upheaval*: "Syria's image was so forbidding that reality could not possibly match what I had been told before our arrival. Syria had distinguished itself as one of the most intransigent of Arab regimes. It was surely the most militant of the so-called confrontation states. . . . Since independence in 1946, Syria's history had been one of violence, radical changes, and a succession of coups d'état reflecting the tensions within Syrian society and the pressures of Arab politics and ideologies."[17]

Hafiz al-Asad's War

As Nixon and Kissinger were grappling with peace initiatives with Egypt and Jordan at the start of the 1970s, Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad was consolidating his rule. He deeply believed that his first priority should be changing the balance of power in the region in his state's favor and allowing the Arab world to regain its standing after the humiliation of 1967. In his estimation, the loss of the Golan in 1967 was a blemish on

Syria's honor, and redressing this loss became a deep obsession for him. Asad also was concerned about Israel's occupation of Syria's territory abutting Lake Tiberias and Israel's refusal to recognize Syria's water rights in relation to the lake.[18] The Syrian president was keenly aware that his position within the state and his legitimacy in the eyes of the Syrian people rested to a large degree on how he engaged Israel. He felt that his stature, both in the wider Arab world and in the eyes of Syria's main ally, the Soviet Union, could also be strengthened if he could assert himself as an effective leader in the Arab world.[19]

Unlike King Hussein and Anwar al-Sadat, who viewed their countries' futures primarily through brokered engagement with Israel, Asad, a fervent Arab nationalist, believed that the future was a struggle for the preservation of the Arab people and that negotiations with Israel, a country he profoundly distrusted and rejected, would lead not to concessions but only to more weakness. Only war could allow Syria to engage Israel on more equitable terms, even if not all territory was recovered.[20] As Patrick Seale observes, "This grim assessment that war was a necessity was peculiarly Syrian, stemming from the frustrations of twenty years of border tussles with Israel, from Syria's passionate attachment to the Palestine cause and more generally, from the perception that Syria and Israel, face to face and competing for primacy in the Levant, were doomed to be antagonists."[21]

Unaware of Sadat's secret negotiations with the United States, Asad found the Egyptian leader to be an amenable partner for planning a war against Israel. Sadat shared Asad's conclusions that negotiating from a position of strength would advance Egyptian interests more than the slow tempo of negotiations brokered by the United States. By 1972, planning for the war had begun in earnest, with all parties keeping the plans secret from both the Soviet Union and the United States.[22]

In a conversation with Patrick Seale, Asad recounted the agreed-upon Syrian-Egyptian strategy for the war: "The goal was the retrieval of territory which Israel occupied in 1967. Each country was free to plan its offensive on its own front, but it was agreed that Syria's aim was the recovery of the Golan while the Egyptian objective was to reach Sinai passes in the first stage before regrouping for the reconquest of the whole peninsula. This was what Sadat and I decided and it was on this principle that we went to war."[23]

However, Sadat deceived Asad. Asad and his inner circle believed that he and Sadat were fighting a war with similar goals.[24] But Sadat instructed his generals to pursue a military campaign whose sole goal was to capture the ten-mile zone east of the Suez Canal, while showing Asad fake military plans that would support their agreed-upon strategy. Launching their offensive on October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria made initial gains, with Asad believing that as he attempted to advance in the Golan Heights, Sadat would cross the Suez, halt ten miles east of the Suez line to resupply, and then advance to the Israeli border to give Asad time to capture the Golan Heights.[25]

But instead of continuing to advance on the Sinai, Egypt fortified its position ten miles in and did not advance, allowing Israel to refocus its attention on the Syrian front by October 8. In conversations with Yevgeny Primakov, one of the principal advisers to the Soviet leadership on the Middle East, Asad noted, "We would have been able to hold out against the onslaught—even at the expense of losing territory—if the Egyptian advance had been followed through, which would have forced the Israelis to redeploy their troops to the western front. But that is not what happened, and that is why Syrian troops bore the brunt of the Israeli offensive."[26]

Recounting to Primakov his intentions for the war, Asad said, "We in Syria were aware that at the end of the war there had to be a political settlement built around UN Security Council resolutions. However, our plans were based on the assumption that by the time the UN intervened, we would have managed to liberate territory on both fronts that had been occupied by Israel in 1967."[27] Asad entered the post-1973 war environment with significantly less leverage than he'd originally intended, thus making him more amenable to engaging the United States.

Attempting Stronger Relations with Syria

On December 13, 1973, Henry Kissinger landed in Algiers to meet with Houari Boumediene, the president of Algeria and a close friend of Hafiz al-Asad. Boumediene stressed to Kissinger that in his view, the US and the Soviet Union were attempting to force a settlement on the Arab world. Kissinger responded to the Algerian president: "We don't want a Russian-American peace either, but we work with the Soviet Union because it is the only way to influence their actions. But we don't have the same objectives. . . . I told President Sadat, so I will tell you the same thing: We don't need a recognized preferred position in Egypt, Algeria, or anywhere. We can afford to rely on the proposition that a nationalist Arab who wishes to improve the well-being of his own people will have many reasons for good relations with the United States."[28]

Kissinger arrived in Damascus on December 15, 1973, for the first meeting of a US secretary of state with the president of Syria since John Foster Dulles met with Adib al-Shishakli in 1953. As a first step toward establishing stronger relations, at their first meeting Asad and Kissinger agreed to establish interest sections in both of their countries to begin to broker dialogue.[29] However, a short exchange between the two underscored how wide a gap in both identity and interests divided these two nations. Kissinger noted to Asad, "This is the first high level contact between our two countries in years." Hafiz al-Asad curtly rejoined, "The U.S. is responsible for all of this."[30]

In the same meeting, Hafiz al-Asad articulated a number of observations on Syria's relations with the United States with the intention that these would be the basis of their new engagement. Opening this new period of engagement, Asad stressed, "We are not and never were against the people of the United States. I have said this many times and in many places. There is much convincing evidence that we have to be against US policy because it is against Syrian interests and just aspirations." Underscoring the relationship between the United States and Israel, Syria's principal enemy, Asad noted, "Had it not been for US assistance in support of Israel, Israel could not remain in occupation and force out the Palestinians from their lands since 1948 but we are not against the United States as a country or a people."[31]

In meetings with Kissinger, Asad seemed unable to separate Israeli policy from American policy. He raised the example of the Suez crisis of 1956, when President Eisenhower forced Israel and Britain to withdraw from Egypt. Asad believed that situation showed that the United States could force a disengagement agreement if it so wished. Kissinger countered by arguing that circumstances had become more complex since then, but Asad was not convinced. This conceptual gap between the United States' perceived capability and its actions was one that Kissinger never was able to overcome with Asad.[32]

Kissinger came to see Asad as a leader who was more independent from Moscow than he had originally estimated.[33] In a conversation in Damascus on the Jordanian crisis of 1970, Kissinger said that he perceived Syria's intervention in Jordan to be on behalf of the Soviet Union's interests in the Middle East. In particular, he noted the role of Soviet military advisers during the conflict. Asad countered this characterization, stressing that his decision to intervene in Jordan was made separately from the Soviet Union and that Moscow had had no advance knowledge of Damascus's decision to intervene. Asad's willingness to act independently from the Soviet Union and, at times, to keep them at arm's length from his negotiations with the United States reflected his pragmatic pursuit of Syria's interests above and beyond the demands and requirements of his allies.[34]

Finally, breaking with Syria's rejectionist policies towards Israel, a core component of Syrian foreign policy since 1948, Asad said, "We in this area want to realize a just peace. We are serious. We want to build our own country. We need a just peace." Interlinked with a "just peace" was the Palestinians' status. Asad stressed, "There can be no peace with justice unless the Arab Palestinian question is settled. The Arab people of Palestine were driven out by force and are now living in camps. How can there be peace without settling their problem?"[35]

In his cables to Washington, Kissinger noted that Syria's identity was more interlinked with its Arab identity than Egypt's was; he believed the latter state was willing to pursue peace on its own terms without the Palestinians.[36] For Asad, his state's Arab identity could not be discounted. Asad emphasized that this identity placed constraints on Syria's pursuit of its strategic interests: "We find our policy reflects the hopes and aspirations of our own people. They support it. Otherwise we would face a number of difficulties."[37]

Syria's Refusal to Go to Geneva

Washington and Moscow had agreed that with a cease-fire agreement signed, holding a peace conference in Geneva with all parties was the best way to reach a peace settlement in the region. Nixon and Kissinger understood that the Soviet premier, Leonid Brezhnev, had secured Asad's participation in the conference. In addition to opening a new chapter for engagement, Kissinger's first visit to Damascus was intended to confirm President Asad's participation in the conference. Surprising Kissinger, Asad stated that he had not yet decided whether or not to attend the conference.[38]

Hoping to convince Asad that he should attend, Kissinger attempted to pique Asad's interests by discussing the format and agenda of the proposed conference. To Kissinger's surprise, Asad was willing to forgo PLO representation at the conference. Acknowledging the difficulties of inviting them in terms of American domestic politics, Kissinger noted to Asad, "Whether the Palestinians will be invited cannot be decided by a few words. If [the] Israeli propaganda machine starts in the US, Israelis will say terrorists are being given recognition."[39]

Asad indicated that he would be willing to discuss the status of the Israeli POWs that Syria had captured during the war if an agreement could be reached on the format for a disengagement agreement. Kissinger expressed to Asad, in turn, that the Soviets had assured him of Syria's interest in returning the POWs. Rebuffing this suggestion, Asad pointedly asked, "Why should we give anything without anything in return. We are taking back our own land." Asad further remarked, "Why give up these cards, for what? The exchange of POWs is linked to land."[40]

To move beyond Asad's assertion that disengagement was a precondition for his participation in the conference, Kissinger suggested that, similar to Egypt, Asad could send military officers to discuss the terms of the disengagement with Israeli representatives. The Syrian president noted that he did not see any practical purpose in sending military representatives if the basic outlines of an agreement could not be agreed on beforehand. Despite these obstacles, Kissinger thought he had moved enough ground to convince Asad to attend the conference, but to his surprise and consternation, during their conversation Asad declined to attend.[41]

Asad stressed to Kissinger that, like Egypt, which already had a disengagement agreement on the Sinai under discussion, Syria should be offered a proposal before the conference. Kissinger argued that he would need more preparatory time to bring Israel on board with a disengagement agreement with Syria. Gauging American intentions, Asad asked Kissinger where the disengagement line on the Golan could be drawn. The secretary avoided committing Israel or the United States to a specific border and noted that he was not in a position in their first meeting to make such a proposal. Aware that his refusal to commit to a specific border might have hindered the negotiations under way on the Sinai, Kissinger stressed to Asad that the time was not right for a disengagement agreement and that further planning was needed. Unconvinced by these arguments, Asad stated, "Israel cannot say no when the US wants them to say yes."[42]

However, Asad assured Kissinger that his absence did not mean that the conference should not occur, and so Kissinger moved forward with organizing Geneva. Nixon and Kissinger privately saw Asad's decision as potentially beneficial because it removed a possible hurdle: if Asad had planned to attend, Israel might have refused to attend the conference unless its POWs were returned beforehand.[43]

DISENGAGEMENT

In Kissinger's meetings with Asad in January and February 1974, the Syrian president was amenable to following Kissinger's step-by-step approach instead of pursuing a full disengagement agreement with Israel on the first round of negotiations. With Israeli forces still occupying Syrian territory, Asad needed a disengagement agreement. However, for him to make such an agreement, Asad insisted that the first disengagement had to move beyond the pre-1973 war borders on the Golan Heights. Asad personally needed to show the Syrian people that a disengagement agreement with Israel symbolically marked the beginning of Israel's withdrawal from the Golan

Heights.[44] As Asad noted in his meeting with Kissinger on February 27, 1974, "Citizens of our country really follow events more closely than in other countries and are very sensitive to national patriotic feelings." Asad also believed that while a "just peace" needed to include a settlement of the Palestinian question, withdrawal on the Golan could be the first step.[45]

Kissinger viewed Asad as a man who was interested in peace, but not without significant concessions; Asad's word could be trusted, but it came at great expense and through difficult negotiation.[46] Kissinger also believed that Asad had less authority than Sadat to make decisions independently from his inner circle, because the Syrian president repeatedly invited his senior political and military officials to join him in his negotiations with Kissinger.[47] However, both Rifaat al-Asad and Abdul Halim Khaddam, members of President Asad's inner circle, stressed that while Asad did engage the leadership of the Ba'th Party and his senior military and intelligence officers, all decisions were ultimately made by him.[48]

With a successful disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel reached in January 1974, Nixon and Kissinger could focus on securing the same between Israel and Syria. Asad condemned Sadat's decision to sign a disengagement on the Sinai before the status of the Golan was settled, but he did very little to undermine the signing. However, after the signing, he tactically escalated the cross-border shelling on the Golan against Israeli positions to increase pressure on Israel to make concessions. Asad also threatened to break the cease-fire agreement that ended the October War.[49] Nixon and Kissinger worried that this environment could escalate to actual war, drawing both Egypt and Syria back into conflict with Israel and potentially leading to Soviet intervention in the region.[50]

Kissinger faced significant opposition from Israeli prime minister Golda Meir on any agreements that went beyond returning to the pre-1973 status quo. From the Israeli leadership's perspective, while Egyptian troops were still on the Sinai peninsula, the Israelis had driven the Syrians back to twenty miles from Damascus. Meir did not believe that Asad's tenuous position justified the type of concessions Israel was willing to make with Egypt. Meir also was concerned that making concessions to Syria would be seen as rewarding its belligerency.[51] However, Asad did have leverage: the status of the Israeli POWs, a deep concern of the Israeli leadership.

The Israeli leadership hoped they could secure the disengagement agreement with Syria with very few concessions. Nixon and Kissinger were not in the best position to move Israel from its position. In Washington, President Nixon was hemorrhaging political capital and authority by the day as a result of Watergate.[52] Nixon and Kissinger also had to keep Israel on board for a potential second disengagement with Egypt, which in their estimation had a better chance of concluding a peace agreement with Israel.[53] Deciding to expend some of his limited political capital, Nixon announced that $2.2 billion in military assistance to Israel would be given as credit and not as aid, as it was originally envisioned. Nixon hoped that this incentive could move Meir and her successor, Yitzhak Rabin, towards the United States' position.[54]

Kissinger also sought to change the conditions in the Arab world to weaken Asad's negotiating position and make him more amenable to any compromises the secretary of state was able to broker. Kissinger successfully convinced King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and the OPEC states to "provisionally" lift the oil embargo, thus eliminating one of Asad's few points of leverage over the United States. Kissinger also encouraged Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria, which all had good relations with Asad, to convince the Syrian president to be flexible if negotiations between Israel and Syria could be started.[55]

On March 14 and 15, 1974, Kissinger met with the Israeli leadership to try to move forward with a partial disengagement agreement on the Golan. He urged them to consider returning Quneitra, a town beyond the 6th of October line, the line on the Golan that Israel had held before the October War.[56] For Asad, this town represented a symbolic territorial gain he could present to his people. However, Kissinger assured Israel that he would not press for the removal of any of the Israeli settlements that been constructed on the Golan since 1967.[57]

Aware of the potential strain such agreements could have on the United States' relations with the Soviet Union and the influence Moscow had on Syria, Kissinger traveled to Moscow to meet with Leonid Brezhnev on March 26, 1974, to gauge Moscow's position on the Israeli-Syrian disengagement negotiations. Brezhnev expressed deep concern about the United States' disengagement agreements and accused Kissinger of trying to prevent the Soviet Union from having a role in the peace process. Brezhnev urged that the Geneva conference format be discussed again to settle these territorial questions, but Kissinger sidestepped this request by promising that final status issues on the Arab-Israeli conflict would be discussed in Geneva and assuring the Soviet premier that these were only interim steps. Brezhnev countered that Asad had requested his involvement. When Kissinger asked Asad about this, Asad said he supported the Soviet's eventual role in the peace process, but not at this stage.[58]

On March 29, 1974, Moshe Dayan, Israel's defense minister, brought Washington a new proposal to move the peace agreements forward. In return for a substantial military aid package from the United States, Israel was prepared to agree to a line slightly to the east of the 6th of October line, which included two "limited force" zones, but Quneitra would remain under Israeli control. Kissinger knew this plan would be rejected by Asad.[59] On April 13, General Hikmat al-Shihabi, the chief of staff of the Syrian army, visited Washington and committed to a buffer zone between the two front lines, along with "limited force areas" to either side, but reaffirmed Asad's firm position on Quneitra. However, both sides had differing conceptions of the size of the buffer zone and the number of forces allowed on the Golan.

To move both parties forward, Kissinger began his shuttle between Israel and Syria on April 29, 1974. For Nixon, these negotiations became even more important for buttressing his position in the United States: foreign policy was a refuge for Nixon and the one area where he could hope to leave a legacy not tarnished by his domestic political maneuvering.[60] In Kissinger's first meeting with Israel, the Israeli leadership was unwilling to compromise on their proposal and expressed deep reluctance about making concessions to Syria. To help push the Israelis toward compromise, Nixon sent a letter to Golda Meir urging her to make concessions and warning her of the potential consequences if an agreement could not be reached.[61] Visiting Damascus on May 3 without having gained concessions from Israel, Kissinger worked to deepen trust between the US and Syria, offering Syria financial aid from the United States. Unsatisfied, Asad continued to press on the 6th of October line's placement, but he offered to adjust his position on the status and levels of forces on the Golan.[62]

On May 6 and 7, the Israeli leadership came back to Kissinger with a willingness to return the eastern part of Quneitra to the Syrians, a small concession that they hoped would satisfy Asad.[63] But in Kissinger's meetings with Asad on May 8 and 12, Asad insisted that the disengagement line had to give Egypt all of Quneitra as well as the hills overlooking the city, which Israel had held since the end of the war. Asad had not directly raised the issue of the hills with Kissinger before, but he believed that Syria would be in a strategically vulnerable position if Israel continued to hold those hills.[64] On May 13, during Kissinger's visit to Jerusalem, the Israelis agreed to cede Quneitra, but they would not move on the hills. Visiting Damascus with this significant concession, Kissinger encountered stiff resistance.[65] Asad insisted that any disengagement line had to run along the peak of the hills and that UN forces instead of Israeli forces had to be stationed along that line. The Israelis refused to budge on this, citing their own security concerns.[66]

On May 14, President Nixon asked Kissinger to brief him on the extent of American financial and military assistance to Israel. Nixon privately threatened to Kissinger that he would cut all aid to Israel if the Israelis did not make further concessions. Whether Nixon was in a position to do so at this point is debatable, but the threat underscored the importance Nixon placed on securing this agreement as part of his foreign policy legacy.[67] And so, Kissinger proposed compromises to Israel. On May 16, he persuaded the Israelis to agree to withdraw to the base of the hills.[68] When he visited Asad on the same day, the Syrian president insisted that the concessions were insufficient. Asad finally relented as Kissinger, frustrated with the lack of progress, prepared to leave Damascus. However, Asad insisted that no heavy military equipment could be placed on the eastern slopes of the hills.[69] Meir and the Israeli leadership agreed to this three days later, and Kissinger visited Damascus on May 20, 1974, with the negotiated line agreement.[70]

However, Kissinger encountered further technical issues from both Asad and Meir. On May 21, Asad insisted that Israel withdraw from Mount Hermon and refused to accede to Israeli demands on the size of the demilitarized zone between Israel and Syria.[71] During Kissinger's visit on May 23, Asad softened his position, proposing an increase in the size of the disarmament area and accepting a larger UN force, and requested in exchange that the limited-force zones still have substantial armaments.[72] The Israeli leadership agreed to these concessions on May 24 but required Asad to agree that the Golan Heights could not be used as a point for the Palestinians to launch attacks against Israel.[73]

This final demand struck a particular nerve with President Asad. At the May 27 meeting, Asad said to Kissinger, "Let's speak frankly: you mean the Palestinian resistance. I cannot accept any limitations on their activities in this agreement."[74] But on the following day, Asad committed privately to not allowing the Golan Heights to become a point for launching attacks against Israel. Asad also conceded to the Israelis on their request to keep an observation post on Mount Hermon. These concessions allowed the agreement to go forward, and on May 31, the agreement was signed by both parties in Geneva.[75] In a letter to Asad, Nixon promised to work for a full disengagement from the Golan Heights.[76] The disengagement agreement signed by both Israel and Syria was intended as an interim step: "This agreement is not a peace agreement. It is a step toward a just and durable peace on the basis of Security Council Resolution 338 dated October 22, 1973."[77] With the signing of the agreement, Nixon waived further repayment of the military assistance credit to Israel and also promised to consult with Israel on further steps towards peace with Syria.[78]

Asad's willingness to show flexibility and engagement with Israel opened the door for a new period in American-Syrian relations. The US also created an opening for substantive relations with a state they once perceived as a rejectionist Soviet satellite.

POST-DISENGAGEMENT: FROM NORMALIZATION TO DISINTEGRATION OF THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

After the successful brokering of the disengagement agreements on the Sinai and the Golan, President Nixon visited the Middle East in June 1974 in an effort to draw attention away from Watergate and capitalize on Kissinger's intensive spring of shuttle diplomacy between Israel and its neighbors.[79] President Nixon's visit to Damascus was historic: he was the first American president in Syria's history to visit the state. The capital prominently displayed American flags to welcome the president of the United States when Nixon arrived. Surprised by this warm welcome from a state that had substantive relations with the Soviet Union, Nixon noted in his diary, "These people want to be friendly with the US and it runs right down to the rank and file and it goes to the fact that they know the Russians. The Americans, of course, may be in that category soon if we are unable to produce on the peace initiatives we begun."[80]

In their meeting at the presidential palace in Damascus, Hafiz al-Asad remarked to President Nixon, "When I was going to meet you at the airport, my son said, 'Isn't this the same President Nixon you attacked?' I said 'yes, but now we are friends.' This illustrates the problem. If we had not spoken frankly to the people, they would not have seen the change." Asad further stressed to President Nixon, "When we befriend someone, we befriend them frankly and seriously. . . . Permit me to say in this period of estrangement, we cursed the United States as regularly as we prayed. We began to tell our people that we see marks of new trends in US policy. . . . This kind of talk didn't sit well with many in the Party, after twenty years of attacking America. But when the American position is supported by deeds, this will begin to change the people's minds."[81]

Asad used his first meeting with Nixon to gauge America's commitment to the peace process: "Withdrawal cannot be sub-divided or made in stages, and there can be no separate withdrawals as in the case of the disengagement agreements. . . . From now on, we will not tolerate a Sinai withdrawal without a Golan withdrawal." Avoiding committing the US to a particular course of action, Nixon sidestepped the question by promising that he would consult with Israel and its neighbors. "We will not be a party to separate deals. If we can get everything moving together, we will be delighted. We now need a common strategy," Nixon stated.[82]

Unsatisfied with Nixon's generalities, Asad asked Nixon for his thoughts on the borders for Syria. Nixon, wanting to keep Asad engaged in the peace process but also to avoid making any commitments the US could not keep, answered: "We know where it must end. But remember that only we can do anything with those who block the goal you seek. Have confidence. We know the goal; you know where you must go, but you must do it our way. You must understand this." Nixon continued, "If we now announced that we seek to move Israel from the Golan, the media and Israel's friends would block us."[83] Hafiz al-Asad's impression of the conversation was different, however. Asad believed that President Nixon had promised him that the US would take steps to engage the Syrian and the Egyptian tracks concurrently.[84]

Nixon understood the value that Asad saw in having a more open relationship with the United States, both for securing disengagement agreements with Israel and for giving Syria flexibility in its international relations. Syria was a more challenging state to have normalized relations with than Israel or Egypt, but Nixon saw the value of such relations and their potential role in securing America's interests in the Middle East. Leaving Damascus, Nixon wrote down in a diary his impressions of the future of their relations: "All in all, Syria is by far the most difficult country we have in terms of working out some kind of positive continuing relationship. On the other hand, they desperately want to have another string in their bow. They want us to be there, probably to play us against the Russians, and that's why on the way back I said that we must explore every possible way to make some moves toward the Syrians in the economic area."[85]

Nixon's visit to the Middle East was his last overseas visit and represented the end of a pivotal period in American foreign relations. President Nixon resigned in August 1974 and Vice President Gerald Ford was sworn in as president. Ford asked Kissinger to remain in his government positions, and Kissinger emerged as the central figure in American foreign relations from 1974 to the end of the Ford presidency in January 1977. Unlike Nixon, who took a substantive interest in foreign policy, Ford was largely focused on domestic challenges and relied on Kissinger to guide American foreign policy.[86]

Hafiz al-Asad entered the post–disengagement agreements phase with great confidence—after all, he had successfully reacquired land on the Golan that had been seized by Israel in 1967. While the October War ended in defeat for Syria, it proved that the country was still a strategic threat to Israel. Sadat's betrayal allowed Asad to portray himself as the leading front-line state against Israel, and this deepened his relations with Arab states in the region. In particular, his relations with Riyadh grew, with King Faisal providing substantial financial support to the Asad regime.[87]

Asad had soured on the idea of step-by-step agreements, believing that he could not sell the Syrian public on multiple partial agreements with Israel. Equally, he could not support a negotiating process that prioritized Egypt over Syria. Asad did not trust Israel's intentions in the negotiating process, and he believed that if Israel concluded another agreement with Egypt, there would be no incentive to seek a territorial settlement with Syria. In a meeting with Kissinger on October 10, 1974, Asad said, "The

French stayed here as long as Israel has been established. And, I know, it's my generation that experienced it. But they seem to be a people determined with expansionism, fascists in every sense of the word. . . . So, it is very difficult to see if peace can be brought in this area. Of course, this doesn't mean we'll give up our efforts here. But the Arabs shouldn't be deceived." Asad believed that the only way forward was concurrent negotiations between Israel and its neighbors on the return of territory lost in the 1967 war. The question of Palestine would have to be settled as well.[88]

The US position, however, was very far from Asad's. Discussing the challenges of pursuing further disengagement agreements between Israel and its neighbors, Kissinger noted to President Ford on August 12, 1974, that "the Arabs' demand is for the 1967 frontiers. Israel considers that these would be the end of Israel. The country was only 12 kilometers wide in some places. Almost all of Israel would be under SAM coverage. The Palestinians' rights are undefined and Jerusalem very complicated." Outlining his strategy to move the disengagement agreements forward, Kissinger argued, "We must move step by step, which will make further steps possible. Israel says another Golan move is the last one. That is not impossible but it is very difficult. To keep that last, we must move with Jordan or Egypt."[89]

EGYPT AND SYRIA: A PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL

On the question of further disengagement agreements on the Golan, Kissinger took a more conservative position on what could be achieved in negotiations with Israel than Asad envisioned. In conversations with Yigal Allon, Israel's foreign minister, on the future borders of Israel at Camp David on August 1, 1974, Kissinger stated, "I do think it is impossible to accept the 1967 frontiers with Syria." Outlining what he did see was possible, Kissinger explained, "On the Syrian side, it can't be 1967 but it can't be the present line because I think it may be necessary to go one more move with Syria. But it will be some clear distance from 1967."[90]

Acknowledging the obstacles of securing a second agreement on Syria, Kissinger noted to Ford on August 12, 1974: "On Syria, Israel can't give up all the Golan, but it can be more flexible. The problem is the settlements they have right up to the line. We use your newness to delay." Seeing Egypt as the most viable track, Ford agreed with Kissinger that negotiations between Israel and Egypt should be the first priority.[91] Kissinger later characterized this strategy in this light: "My previous strategy was to do Egypt and then close down the whole thing until after our elections. I was not, quite frankly, going to spill very much blood for Syria. Get it started maybe and then let it drag into 1976."[92]

Ford and Kissinger met with Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister, at the White House on the September 13, 1974, to discuss how to move forward on a second round of disengagement agreements. Rabin showed willingness to pursue a second disengagement agreement with Egypt but not Syria at that time. Rabin asked what the United States' current position was on the Golan, to which Kissinger replied: "At the time of the Syrian disengagement, I said we would not push Israel off the Golan." Ford, too, gave his personal assurances that he would prioritize Israel's interests in the negotiating process. Rabin expressed his personal gratitude for this position. Still, Kissinger was aware that setting a redline on the Golan could cause problems for his negotiations with Asad and Sadat. Kissinger believed that some ambiguity was needed in order to keep the process moving forward, noting: "We take the position that it is unrealistic to discuss final borders. If Israel could avoid saying what they will never do with the Syrians, we would be better off." Rabin agreed that Israel would not make any statements publicly that could cast doubt on the United States' and Israel's intentions regarding the Golan. Kissinger was concerned that Asad could try to disrupt the peace process if the Syria track was not seen as being actively pursued.[93]

In Kissinger's meetings with President Asad on October 10 and 14, 1974, the secretary of state sought to give Asad the impression that negotiations resulting in the full disengagement from the Golan Heights were under consideration by the United States. Kissinger told Asad, "We did not discuss any particular withdrawal for any particular country but it is clear to me that in order of readiness or difficulty for Israel the line-up is Egypt first, then the West Bank and then Syria." Stressing the difficulty of pursuing an agreement on the Golan immediately, Kissinger told Asad "specifically that the next movement in the Golan Heights would require the movement of Israeli settlements and that, therefore, he had to be prepared for the most massive problems. . . . And we have to make sure what the right time is to bring that pressure." Kissinger was candid with the Syrian president about the obstacle of persuading Israel to remove settlements on the Golan, but he was less candid with Asad about when the "right time" for negotiations would occur.[94]

Asad pushed back against Kissinger's step-by-step strategy, stating, "On the contrary, the Israelis are behaving in a manner similar to before the war. Nothing has changed." Recounting his perception of Nixon's commitments to him in June 1974, Asad noted, "The United States assured us that the United States would not be a party to a separate deal. [Nixon] said when we talk about subdividing the question, he said we do not mean subdividing the Golan or the Sinai or the West Bank but we mean tackling the subject itself in different categories. Category one is withdrawal from 1967, Jerusalem would be another category, and the Palestinian people would be the third category."[95]

Avoiding Asad's interpretation of the Nixon's words, Kissinger tactfully noted, "That must have happened at dinner." Asad pressed further: "It happened when you were there." Kissinger had no interest in pursuing simultaneous disengagement agreements with Israel because he knew Rabin would not agree to such an initiative and it would hinder the possibility of securing a second disengagement with Egypt. Adding further complications to Kissinger's territorial negotiations, Asad noted that they should "think on the lines of needing more secure borders further west and south—Galilee for instance." Confident of Egyptian support for this agreement, Asad boasted to Kissinger, "We have a signed agreement between ourselves that there will be no separate agreement."[96]

Kissinger's meetings in October 1974 illustrated the deep differences between his words and his intentions. Richard Murphy, America's ambassador to Damascus during this period, recalled that Asad was under the impression these talks were a genuine attempt at securing a full disengagement on the Golan Heights. Murphy noted, "Asad was always ready to see me" to discuss the disengagement agreement.[97]

Murphy also noted that Kissinger would largely keep him in the dark on the strategy for disengagement negotiations with Syria: "When Kissinger came through . . . it was always seen as maybe something else would happen. But there was never any of the highly detailed discussions" on what the disengagement agreement would entail in the case of the Sinai track. Kissinger repeatedly assured Murphy that while negotiations were very difficult on the Golan, they were not impossible and were continuing. Looking back on his time as ambassador, Murphy noted that Kissinger's lack of frankness with him had to do with the secretary's proclivity to keep his negotiations on a "need to know" basis.[98]

Asad's insistence that Egypt would not enter into a separate disengagement agreement as long as a second agreement with Syria was not considered proved a difficult obstacle for Kissinger to overcome. President Sadat resisted Kissinger's plans to enter into a Sinai II process without Israel committing to a second disengagement agreement on the Golan. In a meeting in Cairo on October 5, 1974, Egyptian foreign minister Ismail Fahmy stressed that Sadat would not move without a similar move on the Golan. Sadat did not want to be seen in the Arab world as striking out on his own—he needed the cover of a Syrian track. Kissinger met with Rabin on November 8, 1974, in Jerusalem and urged him to consider an agreement with Syria to encourage Sadat to move forward on the Sinai II agreement. But Rabin showed no interest in discussing a disengagement agreement at this stage, and Ford and Kissinger were not prepared to endanger the Sinai track by pushing Rabin too hard.[99]

Kissinger and his senior aides became concerned, though, that a failure of these efforts could produce another war in the Middle East. On March 31, 1975, Kissinger noted to a group of former senior national security officials, "When I was trying to keep Syria out of the war, I gave them our intelligence estimate. I said you'd be badly beaten. Asad's reply was interesting. He said, 'You don't understand that the lesson we learned in 1973—what we finally understood—was that the Israelis could not stand pain. We won't win the war, but we will keep them fighting for many weeks until they can stand it no longer.'"[100]

Instead of applying pressure on Israel to change its position, Kissinger focused on changing Egypt's position. In a meeting with President Sadat on March 9, 1975, Kissinger succeeded in convincing Sadat to remove a second agreement with Syria as a condition for future peace talks with Israel.[101] When Kissinger met with Asad in Damascus the next day, Asad expressed his concerns about Egypt pursuing a peace track independent of Syria: "I am not optimistic. . . . A solution cannot come about without another war. That which has been lost by war, must be returned by war." At this point, Asad was not considering going to war, but he knew that the threat of Syrian military action if peace initiatives failed was a useful point of pressure. Offering a counterproposal, Asad suggested to Kissinger that the US put on hold the Sinai II preliminary discussions and work on preparing a disengagement agreement with Syria and Israel so that both sets of talks could occur at the same time. However, Kissinger rejected Asad's suggestion, insisting that his step-by-step approach had a better chance of securing a disengagement agreement than concurrent negotiations.[102]

Progress on the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement soon encountered obstacles. Kissinger concluded that Rabin would not make the necessary concessions on the borders of the Sinai to move forward with the disengagement agreement. Frustrated with Israeli recalcitrance, President Ford informed his National Security Council on March 28, 1975, that he was reassessing the peace diplomacy. Ford and Kissinger hoped that this would put pressure on Israel to make new concessions. Ford informed his national security team that he was reviewing existing US aid commitments to Israel and suspending new ones.[103] However, Ford's position on Israel was soon undercut by domestic pressures; seventy-six US senators signed a letter to Ford calling for his administration to be "responsive to Israel's economic and military needs." President Ford concluded that pressing Israel would cost him substantially domestically, and he lifted his suspension of aid.[104]

Israel's reluctance to engage on the Sinai with Egypt represented a larger philosophical problem for the Israeli leadership. Aware of the political cost of any of these agreements, Rabin did not share the same urgency for a peace agreement with his state's neighbors as Ford and Kissinger did. Egypt was not in a position after the 1973 war to challenge Israel militarily. As a result, Rabin didn't view Egypt as a pressing threat and believed that the already-brokered partial disengagement from the Sinai would prevent Egypt from jeopardizing such a gain in the short term with another military conflict with Israel. Rabin also doubted the intention of his neighbors, in particular Syria, which had been undertaking a substantial rearmament (to levels above the 1973 war) since the signing of the first disengagement agreement. For the Israeli leadership, Asad's interests in pursuing military parity seemed contrary to his desires for peace. Asad's perception that he could secure the return of the Golan through peace or war meant that Rabin did not trust Syria. In addition, the return of land on the Golan would encounter significant domestic backlash if he was forced to remove settlers from the area, which Israel had never done its history.[105]

To move the peace talks forward, Kissinger and President Ford agreed to revive the Sinai disengagement track. However, Kissinger concluded that the US would have to try to revive the Syrian negotiations to keep the Egyptian peace talks on track.[106] President Ford asked Kissinger, "Do you mean a good faith effort, or actually doing something?" Kissinger responded:

> Things have changed. Before, I think a good faith effort would have done it, but Sadat has now been placed in a more difficult position, and the Syrians, who would have accepted most anything in March, are now in a stronger position. Therefore our effort would have to be as great as now. A shuttle wouldn't suffice because that has been depreciated now. Asad is under pressure at home for going too far. He told me his domestic situation will be impossible if Sadat gets something and he doesn't. I said the Israeli settlements were so far forward that we could get only a sliver, or else something greater in the context of peace. He said that in the context of peace he could assure [me] there would be no Syrian troops forward of the line looking into Israel. I reported this in Israel as a great achievement,

> but it was counterproductive because I think the last thing Israel wants is a negotiation with Syria.[107]

President Ford and Kissinger met with Rabin at the White House on June 11, 1975. Rabin struck a firm tone on a peace settlement with Israel's neighbors: "We cannot withdraw to the 1967 borders in the Sinai. We cannot go down from the Golan Heights even in the context of peace. . . . And on the Golan for example, for a period of say 10 to 20 years, until there is a change of attitudes that occurs with the Arabs. The concept of stationing of forces and changing of attitudes, it is applicable to Egypt as well." Rabin said he was open to discussing an interim agreement with Egypt, but he pushed back on a similar interim agreement on the Golan. Rabin acknowledged, "We cannot evacuate settlements in an interim agreement. I am being frank. That is not true in an overall settlement." On what he could offer Syria at this stage, Rabin stated, "All we can do in the Golan would be cosmetic."[108]

On June 15, 1975, Kissinger agreed to Rabin's "cosmetic" offer. Simon Dinitz, the Israeli ambassador to the US, asked Kissinger, "Would there be a principle agreed that we would not be asked to get out of the Golan Heights although the line there might change?" Kissinger assured the Israelis of his support and noted that he could construct the negotiations in a way that would deceive Asad so that Tel Aviv would not have to make substantial concessions: "As to my ideas in regard to Syria. . . . We would both understand that they would not be likely to succeed. Then at a time when a stalemate appears near, you would make some cosmetic changes unilaterally as a gesture of good will. Then we would jointly recommend that the negotiations be moved to the overall stage. By that time there would be no compulsion to enter into intensive talks. We would conduct ourselves defensively, aiming at avoiding being isolated."[109]

As Ford and Kissinger were finalizing the details of the "cosmetic" line with Israel, they met with Abdul Halim Khaddam and the Syrian ambassador to the United States, Sabah Kabbani, on June 20, 1975, in Washington. Ford made the case to the Syrian delegation that a step-by-step approach toward a final settlement, including possibly Geneva, was the conclusion of their review of policy. They informed Khaddam that Egypt would be the first step. Kissinger did not disclose the "cosmetic" concession Israel was willing to offer on the Golan. However, Kissinger sought to ameliorate Syria's concerns, noting that President Ford genuinely hoped to pursue peace between Israel and Syria and recognized Syria as "the center of the Arab nation."[110]

Ambassador Dinitz met with Kissinger on July 1, 1975, and pressed Kissinger again on the "cosmetic" agreement: "With regard to Syria, is it clear and understood that an interim agreement with Syria would only constitute cosmetic changes and that to the extent there was no agreement with Syria it would not affect U.S.-Israeli relations in the political, economic or military spheres?" Kissinger reassured him that the United States was still amenable to this position.[111]

In his final meeting in Damascus on August 23, 1975, with Asad, Kissinger presented his new initiative to begin negotiations on the Golan but noted that Israel would not be able to withdraw completely from the Golan Heights at that stage. Asad skeptically asked: "What's the use of a few kilometers in the southern Syrian front? No, if Israel remains in Golan, as her actions and strengthening of settlements seem to indicate, then it is absolutely hopeless even to fool our people with any hopeful prospects. What would any Syrian, or any Arab for that matter, feel when he sees Quneitra as a ghost town? What kind of liberation can we call that when the Israelis are not only looking down on Quneitra but also building more and more things right on the edge of that city! Are we kidding?!"[112]

Attempting to placate Asad and prevent him from taking any action that would disrupt the Egypt agreement, Kissinger conveyed a surprisingly candid message from President Ford to President Asad: "Frankly we cannot tolerate any more a nation of 3 million dictating to the U.S. policies which are not necessarily in our best interest." Kissinger urged Asad to have patience and assured him that after the US congressional elections in 1977, the domestic political conditions would be more favorable for securing a peace settlement. Kissinger also conceded that Nixon's resignation had set back the process. Their meeting ended amicably, but Asad concluded that US-led negotiations with Israel would not lead to the return of the Golan Heights. However, resigning himself to the prospect of an Israeli-Egyptian agreement, the Syrian president concluded that nothing could be done to alter the course of those negotiations.[113]

On September 1, 1975, an Egyptian-Israeli agreement on the Sinai was signed in Geneva.[114] In a complete betrayal of Asad, Sadat agreed to not undertake any "belligerent" action against Israel if Syria engaged in a war against it. Ford and Kissinger had succeeded in their overarching strategy of bringing one of Israel's neighbors out of conflict and leaving its other neighbors isolated and without the ability to launch a simultaneous multiple-front war with Israel. But in exchange, Ford had agreed to a number of terms that would severely constrain his ability to act in the region. Accompanying this agreement was a memorandum of agreement between Israel and the United States. The United States committed to two critical points to secure Israel's withdrawal. First, it would "make every effort to be fully responsive, within the limits of its resources and Congressional authorization and appropriation, on an on-going and long-term basis, to Israel's military equipment and other defense requirements, to its energy requirements and to its economic needs." Second, it would "not join in and [would] seek to prevent efforts by others to bring about consideration of proposals which it and Israel agree are detrimental to the interests of Israel."[115]

In allowing Israel to set the terms for the Sinai disengagement, President Ford effectively undercut his ability to add any further pressure on Israel with the signing of Sinai II. Even if Ford had won the 1976 presidential election, his ability to redraw the line on the Golan would have been severely constrained by the nearly ironclad security concessions he gave Israel with the signing of the Sinai II agreement. Ford effectively conceded his ability to use aid as an incentive to make peace. While this agreement allowed the United States to consolidate its relationship with Egypt and effectively ensured Israel's security, it limited the United States from securing a wider peace settlement in the region.

In terms of American relations with Syria, Ford precluded an opportunity for substantial security cooperation between the United States and Syria on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US may have entertained the idea that a more isolated Syria would be willing to make peace on terms more favorable to Israel. But after the Sinai II agreement was signed, President Asad showed no substantial interest in reengaging the United States on a settlement during Ford's term in office. Asad was not interested in getting drawn into further empty promises. As noted in this chapter, Kissinger came away with the similar conclusion: merely isolating Asad would not make him more amenable to making peace on Israel's terms. But the Egyptian-Israeli agreement did succeed in preventing Egypt and Syria from going to war with Israel.[116]

CONCLUSION: A MISSED PEACE

Henry Kissinger addressed a group of Jewish political leaders in New York on June 15, 1975, and in assessing Israeli policy on Syria in the months before the signing of the Sinai II agreement, he said: "We could have split the Palestinians from the Syrians for only a few more kilometers on the Golan, but the Israelis insisted on moving the settlements right up to the line. My feeling now is that the Syrians will be driven toward even greater radicalism. Israel must realize that it must deal with the Arab governments if it does not want to deal with the Palestinians. But you know, Israel is a lot like Germany before the First World War in that there is this tendency to produce what it most fears." Kissinger did not, however, acknowledge the United States' role in preventing the negotiations with Syria from succeeding.[117]

Contrary to received wisdom, which often points to Israel's intransigence or Syria's militant rejectionism as the sole explanation for why the Golan disengagement agreements never progressed past the first disengagement agreement in 1974, this chapter shows that the United States played a substantial role in these negotiations' failure. From the very beginning of Ford's presidency, both the president and Kissinger decided to prioritize a settlement with Egypt over a settlement with Syria. A second Golan agreement was seen as infeasible because of Israel's refusal to move on the settlements on the Golan.

Ford and Kissinger were not willing to risk derailing the peace initiative with Egypt and were equally unwilling to expend political capital on Syria. They recognized as well that Egypt was strategically more important for Israel than Syria, and as a result, an agreement with Egypt was a more obtainable foreign policy objective. They also came to the conclusion that while a permanent peace among Israel and her neighbors couldn't be secured without agreements with Syria and Egypt, the removal of Egypt from conflict with Israel would effectively remove any real strategic threat that Israel's neighbors posed to the state's existence. Syria was never in a position to go to war against Israel unilaterally, without the support of Egypt. Finally, pulling Egypt, the Soviet Union's main strategic ally in the region in the early 1970s, out of the Soviet orbit of influence was seen as a larger strategic gain in the region than pulling Syria out of the Soviet orbit.

Due to the fragile domestic political environment in the wake of Watergate and the upcoming presidential elections in 1976, Ford and Kissinger recognized that with the very limited political capital they had at home to expend on these disengagement agreements, the costs of pressing Israel to make concessions on both the Golan and Sinai were too high. At the same time, though, Ford and Kissinger often purposely advanced policies that gave priority and preference to Israel's security interests over those of Israel's neighbors. At key points in their negotiations with Israel, the United States adopted Israel's positions even though such positions at times were contrary to its own interests.

As documents from this period show, Asad was far from the militant confrontationalist that Nixon and Kissinger had first expected. Asad's willingness to act independently from the Soviet Union surprised Nixon and Kissinger, who were used to viewing the relationships among the great powers and the Third World in the framework of well-defined paradigms. Asad broke this mold; he was both a significant recipient of Soviet assistance and a leader willing to engage the United States and pursue policies independent of the Soviet Union.

As Abdul Halim Khaddam, a member of Asad's inner circle, noted, Asad engaged in the negotiations under the impression that Kissinger was a serious broker.[118] Asad even offered Kissinger security concessions on the border between Israel and Syria, including demilitarizing the border between Syria and Israel, to try to assuage Israeli concerns about withdrawing from the Golan, but by the autumn of 1975 neither the United States nor Israel wished to engage Syria in substantive terms on the Arab-Israeli conflict.[119]

Relations could have taken a different turn, though, if President Ford and Henry Kissinger had taken the risk of expending political capital and genuinely engaged Asad in the peace process, instead of prioritizing Egypt at the cost of a disengagement agreement with Syria. Khaddam recalled that Asad was prepared to sign a disengagement agreement if Israel was willing to end the occupation of Syrian territory. Khaddam noted as well that Asad would not, however, sign a formal peace agreement until the status of the Palestinians was resolved. Because Syria's identity was interlinked with its Arab identity, Asad could not make a formal peace with Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. Rifaat al-Asad noted as well that his brother was prepared to take the necessary steps to achieve a settlement with Israel.[120]

By not taking this path, Ford and Kissinger succeeded in disengaging Egypt from conflict with Israel but did not achieve a wider peace in the region. Khaddam recalled that after the failure of these talks, Asad had no further interest in speaking to Kissinger. Khaddam also noted that while Asad respected America's interests in the region, he believed that America's interests should not come at the expense of Syria's. The Syrian president was willing to maintain relations with the United States, but he came away from these talks with the conclusion that the US could not be a reliable partner for peace because its interests were too interlinked with Israel's.[121]

Hafiz al-Asad, disappointed by the failure of the Israeli disengagement agreements, had begun to turn away from the American peace process by 1977. He notably did not respond to Kissinger's overtures for a potential new peace initiative after the presidential election. The Syrian president had concluded that Kissinger's word couldn't be trusted and that he had been sold a peace process the US would not deliver on. Disillusioned, Asad began to look for new regional alignments to bolster his isolated position and new avenues to confront the threat of Israel after his genuine peace overtures bore no fruit.[122]

Even though President Jimmy Carter came to office in January 1977 determined to move away from the step-by-step approach and toward a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace agreement, domestic politics and regional dynamics prevented him from doing so. In the end, the landmark Egyptian-Israeli peace accord signed on the White House lawn in March 1979 was, in essence, the final step on the Egyptian-Israeli track and a separate peace accord. Egypt was summarily isolated for about a decade in the Arab world for signing the agreement without progress on the Palestinian issue or other Arab-Israeli fronts. Egypt was viewed as having abandoned the Arab cause. The treaty did prevent another all-out Arab-Israeli conflict for the foreseeable future, which, considering the destructive power and economic dislocation of the 1973 war and that it nearly brought about a superpower confrontation, should not be discounted and certainly was a primary goal of both the Israelis and Americans.

However, the treaty also created a regional imbalance that led to Iraq's Saddam Hussein asserting himself in the Middle East in Egypt's absence, leading to his 1980 invasion of Iran and an eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war that laid the foundation for two subsequent Persian Gulf conflicts that directly involved the United States. And as Asad feared, once Israel's southern front was secure, it turned its attentions to the north, against Syrian interests, with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. What became an Israeli quagmire in Lebanon has produced a host of repercussions that are still being felt to this day. So although immensely difficult to orchestrate for reasons this chapter has outlined, the missed opportunity to engage with Syria more seriously toward a comprehensive agreement following the October War certainly had a more long-lasting and region-wide effect than was immediately apparent at the time.

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CHAPTER 11

FROM MADRID AND OSLO TO CAMP DAVID

The United States and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1991–2001

Jeremy Pressman

From 1991 to 2001, Arab-Israeli relations were characterized by diplomatic triumphs as well as familiar problems. The multilateral peace conference at Madrid, the secret Oslo negotiations and agreement, the return of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leaders to historic Palestine, and Israel's disengagement from Gaza all seemed to herald an era in which the contentious aftermath of the 1967 war might finally be addressed and resolved. Yet bus bombings, checkpoints, and, most importantly, the second Palestinian uprising *(intifada)* reminded all the participants that neither side had abandoned the use of force in its relations with the other.

Throughout the 1990s, first under President George H. W. Bush (1989–1993), a Republican, and then under President Bill Clinton (1993–2001), a Democrat, the United States remained deeply involved in Arab-Israeli relations. In 1991, the Bush administration capitalized on major changes in regional and world politics to jump-start the peace process at Madrid. US officials sought to negotiate agreements and then shepherd their implementation through intensive involvement in negotiating details and logistics. Secretaries of State James Baker III, Warren Christopher, and Madeleine Albright expended great effort on the issue and frequently met with Arab and Israeli officials; they often traveled to the region to further negotiations. President Clinton regularly hosted the Israeli prime minister and the PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat, at the White House. He traveled to Geneva to meet with Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad in January 1994, and the presidents met again in March 2000 when Clinton thought an Israeli-Syrian deal was likely. When the second *intifada* erupted in late 2000, US diplomats unsuccessfully worked to bring it to an end.

US diplomatic efforts from 1991 to 2001 came the closest yet to achieving the long-sought-after American goal of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, but in the end the conflict was not resolved. Israel and Jordan inked a peace deal, and the fact that Israel now has signed peace treaties with two of its neighbors is in part due to Washington's diplomatic diligence. But Israeli-Palestinian agreements collapsed in violence despite enormous US investments in the peace process. Moreover, Israel and Syria came close to signing an agreement in 1999–2000, but they could not bridge the last differences over the exact border delineation of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. A wide range of political and procedural errors blocked the achievement of both agreements. Near the end of Clinton's presidency, the Arab-Israeli negotiating failures at Shepherdstown, Geneva, and Camp David were part of a disappointing conclusion to ten years of talks. The US inability to contain the second *intifada* only reinforced the distance between the American interest in a comprehensive peace and the reality on the ground.

Throughout this period, Israeli prime ministers were either cognizant of the importance of US-Israeli ties or paid the price for challenging Washington. The three Israeli leaders from the left-wing Labor Party—Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Ehud Barak—had fewer problems because their efforts to advance the peace process dovetailed with US interests. The challenge was greater for right-wing Likud Party leaders—Yitzhak Shamir and Benjamin Netanyahu. In 1992, Shamir's reelection bid suffered from the US-Israeli fight over loan guarantees and Israeli settlements. In 1999, Netanyahu's record of undermining the peace process led to strains in the US-Israeli relationship.

In this chapter, I first describe changes in the international and regional distribution of power that opened the door to Arab-Israeli diplomacy. Next, I address the Oslo agreements (1993, 1995) and some of the specific reasons why the Israeli-Palestinian process failed. I then consider the tenures of Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak, the failed Camp David summit (2000), and the Clinton Plan and final talks at Taba, Egypt, in January 2001. In the closing section, I consider four broader explanations for why Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian talks never led to peace agreements. I conclude that political and procedural factors, not conflicting objectives or violent opposition, best explain the failures.

SHIFTING POWER: THE PATHWAY TO MADRID

After shifts in the global and regional distribution of power set the stage for the Arab-Israeli peace talks of the 1990s, the United States played an important role in bringing the parties together for diplomatic talks. The end of the Cold War and the 1991 Gulf War eliminated the Arab military option against Israel. Whether the military option meant attacking Israel or trying to acquire parity in the arms race, the Arab side's only hope was based on Soviet military and financial support. Only

Soviet support could give the Arab armies access to weapons that could meet US/Israeli weapons on the battlefield. Only Soviet subsidies and aid could facilitate the Iraqi and Syrian purchase of such weapons.[1]

The Soviet decision in 1987 to stop subsidizing Syrian arms purchases strongly reinforced the trend that had started when Egypt made peace with Israel in 1978–1979 and thereby greatly reduced the possibility of a coordinated Arab attack against Israel. After the reformist Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev told Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad of the change in Soviet policy, Syria dropped its pursuit of strategic parity with Israel; it had no choice. The Arab side could still resort to violence through guerrilla war and terrorism through proxies, but it could not seriously challenge Israel in the conventional military arena. Since that time, the only Arab strikes against Israel have been by substate actors such as Hamas, Lebanon's Hizbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and various factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The Soviet decision was followed in 1991 by the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait by a US-led coalition. Not only did the United States reverse Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, but it also destroyed a significant amount of Iraqi arms. The UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctioned the creation and enforcement of "no-fly zones" in southern and northern Iraq where Iraqi aircraft were barred. UN inspectors traveled around Iraq and sought evidence of nonconventional weapons; they destroyed Iraqi weapons stocks and equipment. US forces remained stationed in Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf waters, and in smaller Gulf states. Iraq was contained, and the possibility of Iraqi soldiers joining other Arab forces for an attempt from the east to cut Israel in half was gone (though the Israeli fear of an attack on its eastern front lingered).

Taken together, the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War meant the Arab side lacked the numbers and the external support to match Israel in the strategic realm. This did not guarantee a turn toward diplomacy, but it did make such a turn much more likely.

The end of the Cold War and, ultimately, the collapse of the Soviet Union did not dampen US interests in achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. One might have expected that the demise of the only other superpower and longtime US rival for power and influence in the Middle East might have eased US concerns about Arab-Israeli disagreements. Yet the Bush and Clinton administrations, which governed in the period between the Cold War and the al-Qa'ida threat, nonetheless invested heavily in regional diplomacy. The United States remained dependent on Middle Eastern oil, and the continuance of the Arab-Israeli conflict complicated US relations with Arab oil exporters; at a minimum, the possibility of another Arab oil embargo emerging after a future Arab-Israeli clash could not be wholly dismissed. Furthermore, Israel's security remained a central US commitment. Arab-Israeli peace agreements made Israel more secure and reduced the likelihood of a demand for US political or military intervention in a crisis situation similar to the wars in 1967 and 1973.

The United States, then, exploited the opening created by changes in the global and regional balance of power to bring about the first multilateral Arab-Israeli peace conference since the 1970s. The US effort, led by Secretary of State James Baker III, sought to bring together Israel and its neighboring Arab rivals—Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.[2] In part, the United States was indebted to Syria for its membership in the anti-Iraq coalition. The PLO was not invited; instead, the Jordanian delegation, which included Palestinians from the occupied territories, was seen as representing both Jordan and the Palestinian people. During the summer of 1991, after intense US diplomatic lobbying, all the key parties agreed to attend a conference. The opening meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, from October 30 to November 1, 1991. It produced no breakthroughs and largely served as a forum for the public repetition of uncompromising positions.

The Madrid talks were followed by two types of negotiations, bilateral and multilateral, but the negotiations soon stalled.[3] The bilateral talks consisted of Israeli-Syrian, Israeli-Lebanese, and Israeli-Jordanian meetings and were usually held in Washington. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the United States was the sole superpower, and officials hoped to use US primacy to advance the cause of Middle East peace, leveraging its predominant position in the region and the goodwill it had generated by liberating Kuwait in the Gulf War earlier in the year. The talks, however, devolved into dueling press conferences at which the respective diplomats commented on the lack of progress after each day's sessions.

THE OSLO AGREEMENTS

In 1993, as the bilateral talks dragged on, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat both signed off on secret unofficial talks in Oslo, Norway. Rabin did not expect much to come of the talks and probably saw them as a pet project of Shimon Peres, his foreign minister, and Yossi Beilin, deputy foreign minister.[4] Yet in August 1993, the two sides initialed a breakthrough agreement, what soon became known as the Declaration of Principles. Unlike with most of the other diplomatic milestones during this period, the United States was not involved in the Oslo talks; Norway initiated and hosted the meetings. Both parties wanted to shun the inevitable attention commensurate with US involvement, and for Israel, it has always been an objective to deal one-on-one with Arab parties in negotiations, so it can maximize its leverage and avoid American pressure to make unwanted concessions.

In the June 1992 elections, Rabin had promised a breakthrough with the Palestinians. At a meeting of the Labor Party's central committee in March 1992, for instance, Rabin suggested a time frame of six to nine months for reaching an autonomy agreement.[5] Rabin believed that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the short term would help Israel both avoid antagonism from potential strategic threats such as Iran in the long term and lock in US support for Israel.

Arafat was struggling to come to terms with the impact of the first *intifada* and the Gulf War. The PLO had backed Iraq, the losing side in the Gulf War; Arab Gulf financial support had dried up as a result. By 1992–1993, the *intifada* had slowed and lost some of its popular character and appeal. Arafat was still on the outside of the occupied territories, while younger Palestinian leaders on the inside had established a vibrant institutional infrastructure. In order to sustain Palestinian daily life and resistance to the occupation during the first *intifada*, Palestinians had developed a range of political and social welfare organizations. To Tunis-based PLO leaders, these new organizations were potential rival centers of political power.

The Declaration of Principles (DOP), signed on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993, launched the public phase of the Oslo process. That the DOP was signed on the White House lawn was a testament to how quickly the United States recognized the potential value of the agreement. Washington had not been involved in negotiating the deal, but Clinton officials used the White House ceremony to signal US backing for the agreement as well as to indicate that henceforth US diplomatic muscle would support the implementation of the agreement. The parties themselves also probably recognized the value of the United States as a future guarantor, broker, and funder.

The DOP did not resolve the core Israeli-Palestinian issues such as the future status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, or Palestinian refugees. Nor did it explicitly call for a Palestinian state alongside Israel or a freeze on Israeli settlement building in the occupied territories. Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres, upon presenting the Oslo agreement to Secretary Christopher and diplomat Dennis Ross in August 1993, explained why, as Ross recalled: "The logic, Peres stressed, was to build a network of cooperation so that the harder issues would become resolvable in a very different climate."[6]

Instead of dealing with these "harder issues," the DOP set up a five-year transitional period in which Israel would gradually redeploy from the Gaza Strip and West Bank, starting with Gaza and the West Bank city of Jericho. Further withdrawals were contingent on security matters, as explained in the DOP: "Further redeployments to specified locations will be gradually implemented commensurate with the assumption of responsibility for public order and internal security by the Palestinian police." The Palestinians would develop a quasi government, the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority (later known more simply as the Palestinian Authority), hold elections, and develop a "strong police force." Talks on the most difficult issues, "permanent status negotiations," would start by the beginning of the third year of the transitional period. Permanent or final status issues included core disputes over "Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, [and] borders." Article XV created nonviolent mechanisms for resolving disputes.[7]

The Israelis withdrew from Jericho and much of Gaza in mid-1994, and Arafat and many other Tunis-based PLO leaders entered Gaza. This brought Arafat and the leaders of the PLO back into the center of Palestinian politics and gained the PLO legitimacy with the United States. After concern about marginalization and financial troubles, the PLO saw the DOP, however imperfect, as an opportunity for gaining political power and fiscal support. PLO acceptance was a sign of the PLO's weakness, not strength.

Meanwhile, Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty on October 26, 1994, after years of clandestine elite ties. Israeli leaders and Jordan's Hashemite monarchy had long met in secret. Yet because the majority of Jordan's population was Palestinian, Jordan had been unwilling to reach a public agreement with Israel prior to an Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough. The Oslo agreement changed the environment and gave Jordan the political cover it needed to solidify cooperative relations with

Israel as well as regain the good graces of Washington after tacitly backing Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War. The United States helped facilitate the treaty, but Israel and Jordan had no fundamental disagreements and needed only limited outside assistance.

Rabin's election also ushered in an intensive period of Israeli-Syrian contacts from 1993 to 1995. It was a period in which the United States played an active role and Israelis and Syrians made progress on a number of practical issues. The two sides traded diplomatic phrases: Rabin said "the depth of the withdrawal will reflect the depth of peace." In May 1993, Asad offered "full peace for full withdrawal."[8] In 1993–1994, Rabin secretly agreed to a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights to the June 4, 1967, line, though exactly how to delineate that line remained a point of debate. US officials carried messages between Rabin and Asad just before Rabin opted for the Oslo (Israeli-Palestinian) track in August 1993. At a meeting with Clinton in Geneva on January 16, 1994, Asad spoke of a strategic decision for peace and "a new era of security and stability in which normal, peaceful relations among all shall dawn anew."[9] Clinton traveled to Damascus in October of the same year, and Christopher frequently met with Asad and Rabin as well. In June 1995, the United States hosted the Israeli and Syrian chiefs of staff in Washington for talks on security matters at which a good deal of progress was made.[10]

Meanwhile, on September 28, 1995, the Israelis and Palestinians signed a second major agreement that detailed additional territorial changes in the West Bank. The agreement, Oslo II, created three types of West Bank land: Area A under Palestinian security and civil control, Area B under Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control, and Area C under Israeli security and civil rule. The territorial withdrawals of Oslo II proceeded slowly and were never fully implemented. The sides repeatedly disagreed on the exact size, timing, and location of agreed-upon withdrawals, but Israel was the ruling power, so it had the final say. By the outbreak of the second *intifada* in September 2000, the majority of the West Bank, including all Israeli settlements, remained as Area C. About 17 percent of the West Bank was Area A and another 23 percent was Area B.[11]

Unlike the first Oslo agreement, Oslo II was partially the result of intensive US diplomacy, though not of the level of the late 1990s and 2000. Secretary of State Christopher and, in later years, Secretary of State Albright were willing to spend time and political capital nailing down Israeli-Palestinian agreements. US diplomats, including Martin Indyk, Aaron David Miller, and Dennis Ross, moderated, cajoled, proposed, and persuaded until the Arabs and Israelis found common ground on issues both large and small. At times, US diplomats called on other American officials, such as CIA director George Tenet, to play a role with one or both sides.

From 1993 to 2001, the Oslo process proceeded more slowly than planned and ultimately failed to lead to a final resolution of the conflict. At the popular level, neither Palestinian expectations of freedom of movement, economic improvement, and statehood nor Israeli hopes for peace, security, and a normal life were met. Expectations had been high. At the DOP signing ceremony in 1993, Arafat expressed Palestinian hopes: "My people are hoping that this agreement which we are signing today marks the beginning of the end of a chapter of pain and suffering which has lasted throughout this century [and that it] will usher in an age of peace, coexistence, and equal rights."[12] Rabin sought a break with the past: "We wish to open a new chapter in the sad book of our lives together, a chapter of mutual recognition, of good neighborliness, of mutual respect, of understanding. We hope to embark on a new era in the history of the Middle East."[13] These unmet expectations, especially on the Palestinian side, fueled growing disenchantment with the Oslo talks and greater sympathy for confrontational and violent policies, which eventually crystallized into the second *intifada.*

In particular, the Oslo process suffered from four developments. First, some Palestinian groups, including Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, attacked and killed Israeli civilians. To Israelis, terrorist bus bombings inside pre-1967 Israel suggested that they were not safe personally and that the process was not leading to normalization and peaceful relations. The wave of bus bombings in February–March 1996, for instance, killed and wounded hundreds of Israelis and contributed to the defeat of Prime Minister Shimon Peres in the May 1996 elections.

Second, some Israeli Jewish settlers used terrorist violence against Palestinians, mostly in the West Bank. The first Hamas suicide bombings came after an Israeli settler killed twenty-nine Palestinians at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron on February 25, 1994. Most of the settler attacks, however, were less dramatic and often resulted in injury and property destruction rather than death. Yet when coupled with the civilian casualties from Israel Defense Forces (IDF) counterterror operations, they had a corrosive effect on Palestinian views of Israeli intentions.

Third, Israel continued to massively develop the West Bank settlements, including building a network of Jewish-only bypass roads that crisscrossed the West Bank. From 1993 to 2000, the number of Israeli settlers increased by at least 117 percent in Gaza and at least 46 percent in the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem, where settler growth was also large).[14] In the 1990s, Israel stopped authorizing new settlements but still allowed the building of new "neighborhoods" for existing settlements. Israeli settlers also proceeded to set up tens of unauthorized outposts, a practice that mushroomed after Ariel Sharon became prime minister in 2001.[15]

Fourth, Israel used collective punishments, such as checkpoints, home demolitions, closure and curfews, bureaucratic procedures, and targeted assassinations, to advance its security objectives. For example, approximately 670 Palestinian homes in the West Bank (including Jerusalem) were destroyed from September 1993 to June 1998.[16] Israel also implemented a policy of revoking permission to live in Jerusalem from Palestinians who could not prove the center of their life was in Jerusalem; Palestinians had to prove that their work, family, education, and housing centered on Jerusalem rather than elsewhere in the West Bank or abroad. Over 1,600 Palestinians and their families were removed in this way from 1996 to 1998, according to Israeli officials.[17] Palestinians often rejected Israel's security justifications for these policies and instead highlighted Israel's desire for continued control of the West Bank. A process Palestinians thought would lead to the end of the occupation instead seemed to be leading to its intensification.

While Washington was deeply involved in the negotiations, it refrained from coercing either party. With one exception in the 1990s, the United States did not provide aid directly to the Palestinian Authority, so it could not threaten to withhold aid if the PLO or PA failed to fulfill their commitments.[18] Although Israeli settlement expansion was changing the reality on the ground in the West Bank and undermining Palestinian support for the Oslo process, the United States did not exert significant pressure. The United States deducted the costs of settlement expansion from multi-billion-dollar loan guarantees Israel had secured from the United States, but this was a marginal punishment that had a limited practical effect. With only a few exceptions, the United States has long been reluctant to threaten Israel.[19]

On November 4, 1995, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli Jew. The killing deeply affected the personal chemistry of US-Israeli relations. Clinton and Rabin had developed a warm relationship in the first years of Clinton's presidency; the young president had enjoyed interactions with Rabin, an older, seasoned politician. Reflecting on Rabin's death, Clinton later wrote, "We had become friends in that unique way people do when they are in a struggle that they believe is great and good. . . . I had come to love him as I had rarely loved another man."[20] At Rabin's funeral, Clinton's comment *"Shalom chaver"* (Goodbye friend) captured their friendship and came to embody the profound sense of shock and loss felt by many Israelis. Arafat was also a frequent visitor to the White House, but the relationship between Clinton and Arafat, though cordial, lacked the personal chemistry of the Clinton-Rabin ties.

NETANYAHU AND BARAK

The Rabin assassination exacerbated Israeli-Palestinian problems. Not only was Rabin gone, but he was replaced six months later by Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, who had campaigned against the Oslo process. A wave of Palestinian bus bombings in February–March 1996—a response to Israel's assassination of Palestinian bomb maker Yahya Ayyash in January—had the effect of reinforcing Netanyahu's criticism of Rabin's temporary replacement, Shimon Peres, just before the May 1996 elections.

With Netanyahu's electoral victory, the United States was challenged with the task of getting a harsh opponent of the Oslo process to implement it and continue negotiations. Some agreements were signed, such as the Hebron Protocol (January 15, 1997) and the Wye agreement (October 23, 1998), but Bibi's overall stance further undermined Israeli-Palestinian relations. US officials worked hard to keep Netanyahu's government committed to the Oslo agreements, but in doing so they usually gave some ground as the contents of past agreements were renegotiated. The Hebron agreement (1997), for instance, relaxed the expectations contained in the Oslo II agreement (1995) for further Israeli withdrawals from parts of the West Bank. As Israel slowed the negotiations and the pace of the withdrawals, Netanyahu's relations with both Arafat and Clinton became strained.

The Wye agreement was classic US-led Middle East diplomacy and typified US efforts in 1996–1999 to keep the peace process afloat, but the agreement's actual impact was limited. The United States invited Arafat and Netanyahu to the Wye River Plantation in Maryland for intensive discussions. Clinton, along with the terminally ill King Hussein of Jordan, worked at an agreement until the two parties signed a deal on West Bank land, Palestinian prisoner releases, the Palestinian charter, and other issues. The agreement led to some modest progress, but relations quickly soured. Clinton traveled to Israel and Gaza in December 1998 to try to aid the faltering process.

The Israeli government changed again when the left-leaning Labor Party and Ehud Barak defeated Netanyahu and his Likud Party in elections on May 17, 1999. Although Barak signed an Israeli-Palestinian protocol at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in September 1999, he chose to first move aggressively on the Israeli-Syrian front. Despite Palestinian concern, the United States backed Barak's focus on Syria. The United States finally hoped to capitalize on the commitment of Yitzhak Rabin and his successors to withdraw from the Golan Heights to the June 4, 1967, line, the line that Syria demanded in order to sign an agreement.

After high-level talks in December 1999, Israeli and Syrian negotiators met in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in January 2000. Barak was concerned about opposition in Israel to a full withdrawal, and the talks failed. In March 2000, Syria thought it had a US commitment that Israel would agree to the June 4, 1967, line, as opposed to the 1923 international boundary or other possible borders. Asad and Clinton met in Geneva expecting a momentous breakthrough, but the meeting immediately broke down when it became clear that Israel was proposing a modified version of the June 4, 1967, line. Barak, with US knowledge, had decided not to offer Syria a complete return to the June 4, 1967, line, and so the two sides failed to come to an agreement.[21] Having failed to secure an agreement with Syria, in which Barak also hoped to come to an agreement regarding Lebanon, Israel unilaterally withdrew its soldiers from southern Lebanon in May 2000. On June 10, 2000, Asad died.

During the first part of Barak's term, Palestinian attacks on Israelis nearly ceased. Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation and Palestinian hopes that Barak's new government would lead to a two-state breakthrough combined to usher in greater quiet in Israel. In 1999 and the first ten months of 2000, only seven Israelis were killed in terror attacks—including just one inside pre-1967 Israel.[22] According to Ami Ayalon, the head of Israel's Shin Bet at the time, Palestinian political hope led to a drop in Palestinian mass support for violence and an increased willingness on the part of Palestinian security personnel to combat it.[23] Some have argued that Israel squandered this period of Israeli-Palestinian calm by focusing on Syria instead of pursuing high-level Israeli-Palestinian talks.

THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT

In the spring of 2000, during Clinton's last year in office, Barak turned his attention to the Palestinian track after the failure with Syria. Perhaps hoping to recapture the Scandinavian magic of Oslo, the two sides held secret talks in Stockholm, Sweden, to deal with the core issues, but these negotiations broke up inconclusively after word of the talks leaked to the media. Israel soon decided to pursue a high-level, high-stakes summit to resolve the conflict. Barak, long a skeptic of Oslo's incrementalism, felt this was the only way to test whether Arafat would commit to a final agreement instead of offering only more interim steps and indecision. Palestinian leaders resisted in part because they feared the intensity of joint American-Israeli pressure in a closed summit, but US cajoling caused Palestinian leaders to set aside their concerns. President Clinton announced on July 5, 2000, that Israeli and Palestinian delegations had agreed to join him at his presidential retreat, Camp David.

Many explanations have been offered for the failure of the American-Israeli-Palestinian summit of July 11–25, 2000, but all parties contributed to its demise. The conventional wisdom that Israel made a generous offer and the Palestinian negotiators rejected it out of hand is not backed up by the evidentiary record.[24]

The United States made a number of procedural errors. Washington pressured a reluctant Palestinian leadership to attend, promised not to blame the Palestinians if the summit failed, and then reneged on that promise. US diplomats had not lobbied other Arab leaders to support Palestinian concessions on Jerusalem and did not have a workable fallback plan for the summit should an overall agreement prove impossible. After meeting Israeli-Palestinian resistance, US officials quickly backed away from presenting written drafts of compromise language on sticky issues. At least in hindsight, the gap between Israel and the Palestinians on all the core issues entering the summit was wider than one would want coming into a meeting at the highest levels.

Israel attended the talks with unrealistic expectations about the Palestinian bottom line. During the summit, Israel rejected Palestinian sovereignty in the Arab parts of East Jerusalem and limited the Palestinian territory in the West Bank to two or three noncontiguous chunks of, at most, 91–92 percent (and by other measures as little as 77 percent) of the entire West Bank.[25] Why Israel thought the Palestinians would accept this package is a lingering historical puzzle. In general, Barak often seemed to assume he knew best and could compel others to follow his lead, but this approach failed at Camp David, much as it did on other issues during his short tenure as Israeli prime minister. At the summit itself, he did not engage Arafat, even though Arafat would have had to sign off on any of the central Palestinian concessions on Jerusalem and refugees that were needed to strike a deal. Some Israeli and US diplomats also mistakenly thought that the unofficial final status agreement negotiated in 1995 between Palestinian Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Yossi Beilin, known as the Beilin–Abu Mazen agreement, could serve as a rough blueprint for the summit.

Palestinian negotiators operated from a defensive position, fearful that Israel and the United States would try to compel them to accept the unacceptable. The Palestinians were largely reactive and never presented a detailed proposal that went much beyond international law and UN resolutions. Contrary to many claims, however, the Palestinians did present a map of the West Bank proposing the Israeli annexation of 2–3 percent of the West Bank. The delegation was beset by power struggles, as was common under Arafat's long rule of the Palestinian national movement. Arafat's rejection of a key aspect of Jewish history—the site of the ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem's Old City—undermined his credibility.

Some promising ideas solidified at the summit, however. The Palestinians agreed to the idea of swapping land for a few major settlement blocs in the West Bank that Israel wanted to annex, though how narrow or expansive such blocs should be remained a contested issue. Israel's idea of dividing Jerusalem was a breakthrough, even if Israel did not offer Palestinian sovereignty in all Arab areas in East Jerusalem. As they had indicated in prior negotiations, the Palestinians were willing to allow Israeli sovereignty in Jewish neighborhoods of East Jerusalem.

After the summit, quiet talks continued into August and September 2000, but just as the United States was about to present its own plan, the second *intifada* erupted.[26] Ariel Sharon, then the leader of the Israeli parliamentary opposition, visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on September 28, and Palestinian protests broke out and escalated. The Tanzim, an offshoot of the nationalist Fatah movement, welcomed the confrontation as a way to compel by force what Israel refused to give up at the negotiating table: control of the West Bank. The IDF, as planned, responded to the Palestinian protests with massive force, hoping that this would quickly quell the rioting. It had the opposite effect, and by the end of October 2000, 116 Palestinians were dead, compared with 11 Israelis.[27] Once the fighting was under way, Arafat felt the Palestinians could gain further regional and international support and thereby put pressure on Israel if the fighting continued; top Palestinian leaders did little to restrain Palestinian fighters. A Clinton-led summit of leaders at Sharm el-Sheikh in mid-October 2000 and other diplomatic efforts to end the violence failed.

THE CLINTON PLAN AND TABA

On December 23, 2000, President Bill Clinton brought together negotiators from both sides and finally presented a US plan for a two-state solution. His proposal, the Clinton Plan, called for Palestinian sovereignty in Gaza and about 97 percent of the West Bank.[28] Palestinian refugees could stay in their host countries, return to the Palestinian state, or settle in small areas of land handed over by Israel as compensation for Israeli territorial annexations in the West Bank. Though Israel would annex settlement blocs in the West Bank, more-isolated settlements would presumably be dismantled. Israel and third-party states could also choose to absorb some Palestinian refugees, but they were not required to do so.

Clinton called for a division of Jerusalem, with Palestinian sovereignty in the Arab areas of East Jerusalem and Israeli sovereignty in West Jerusalem and the Jewish areas of the east side. He offered two possible compromises for Jerusalem's Temple Mount (Muslims call it the Haram al-Sharif, or Noble Sanctuary), a location holy to both Jews and Muslims. The Clinton Plan also dealt with security matters. In order to pressure the parties, the United States insisted that the plan would be considered a valid proposal only until Clinton left office on January 20, 2001. The plan's continuing relevance today testifies to the bankruptcy of this idea.

The Israeli government accepted the plan but offered reservations. Privately, Barak sent Clinton a long and still-classified letter detailing his concerns, including misgivings about the refugee formulation.[29] In public, Barak rejected Clinton's call for

Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. In practice, this meant a rejection of Clinton's compromise for sovereignty in the holy sites.

The Palestinian response has been the subject of much controversy, but it too was a technical acceptance with significant reservations. Arafat accepted the plan on January 2, 2001, in a face-to-face meeting with Clinton, but offered reservations. Arafat accepted Israel's sovereignty over the central Jewish holy site known as the Wailing Wall but not over the entire ancient temple wall of which it is a part; he objected to Israeli use of West Bank airspace; and he requested a different framework for dealing with Palestinian refugees.[30]

The Clinton Plan was closely followed by Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Taba, Egypt, during January 21–27, 2001. According to most participants and observers, the talks were substantive, and the parties made progress, although the United States was not involved at a time when strong US mediation could have been very helpful.[31] The negotiators issued an optimistic concluding statement: "The sides declare that they have never been closer to reaching an agreement, and it is thus our shared belief that the remaining gaps could be bridged with the resumption of negotiations following the Israeli elections."[32] But on February 6, Ariel Sharon defeated Ehud Barak in Israeli elections, and upon taking office, Prime Minister Sharon chose not to engage in high-level talks. The George W. Bush administration, itself having just come to power on January 20, accepted that approach.

Because both the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations ended in failure, the discussions that took place concerning a deeper US strategic role in the Arab-Israeli arena have been overlooked. Had the Israeli-Syrian negotiations gone differently, for instance, US monitors and peacekeepers might have been sent to the Golan Heights to supervise an Israeli-Syrian deal. The United States also agreed to a request from Arafat for US peacekeepers in the Jordan Valley. In July 2002, two years after the Camp David summit, Bruce Riedel, a former member of the US National Security Council staff, revealed that at the summit Israel proposed "a formal mutual defense agreement including a commitment by the United States to come to the assistance of Israel in the event of attack in the future, enshrined in a treaty to be ratified by the Congress and the Knesset." Israel also wanted the United States to include Israel under the US nuclear umbrella. Israel's draft treaty was an expansion of discussions that had focused on the Israeli-Syrian talks. At Camp David, Israel also sought billions of dollars for new arms and access to advanced US military technology such as Tomahawk cruise missiles and F-22 aircraft.[33]

CONCLUSION: THE FAILURE OF THE PEACE PROCESS

Why did the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian negotiations fail to lead to final peace agreements? In a broad sense, why did the Arab-Israeli peace process of 1993–2001 fail? In this concluding section, I consider four possible explanations and find that political and procedural mistakes, including missteps by Washington, doomed the talks.[34] The claim that one or more parties did not want a peace agreement is the least persuasive explanation despite its widespread popularity.

The Actors Did Not Want Peace

One or more of the parties to the conflict did not actually want peace, so the failure of the talks helped them achieve their true objectives. Participation in the process was a ruse, perhaps to appease the United States and the international community. Negotiators could talk forever without actually reaching a final agreement that would require real sacrifice in exchange for concrete gains. The Palestinians did not want peace; they wanted a single Palestinian state in place of Israel. Israel did not want peace but rather the occupation and annexation of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. Syria would never accept normal, peaceful relations with Israel.

The evidence does not support this claim. Israel, Syria, and the Palestinians invested massive diplomatic energy and political resources in the process. Each expended great amounts of political capital domestically in order to pursue the negotiations; they took risks in the domestic arena that might undermine their hold on power. All agreed to policies that would not be popular at home. For example, Israel agreed to the division of Jerusalem and withdrawal from the Golan Heights; the Palestinians agreed to allow Israeli annexation of some settlements in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank; and Syria accepted normalization with Israel. When Israel recognized that the offer at Camp David had been insufficient, they continued to negotiate (as did the Palestinians). Barak's government paid the ultimate political price: it fell apart over a deal with the Palestinians. When Asad came to Geneva to meet with Clinton in March 2000, the Syrian delegation was massive, because Asad expected to need many officials to iron out all the details of the peace agreement. Israel's offer at the Camp David summit was imperfect for Palestinians only because they truly believed they would be bound by the agreement. If instead they had hoped to use the new state of Palestine as a springboard for a military attack on Israel, the difference between receiving 92 percent or 97 percent of the West Bank and many other stipulations would not have mattered.[35]

One caveat to the idea that Israelis and Palestinians are ready to compromise on all the core issues is that the negotiators do not have a clear solution to the problem of who would control the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. While the contours of an agreement on all the other issues are clear, the division of this sacred area is still unsettled.

Procedural Errors Undermined the Negotiations

On the Israeli-Palestinian track, the way in which the process was constructed and carried out led to its failure. The initial terms of the 1993 Declaration of Principles were too favorable toward Israel. With no explicit mention of a Palestinian state or a settlement freeze, the agreement was bound to run into trouble. The process was too gradual, and this left opponents much time and many opportunities to thwart the drive toward peace. It was driven by elites, and this left out the Israeli and Palestinian publics. They were never conditioned to accept the compromises that would be needed. Along the way, as I noted above with the US performance at the Camp

David summit, the handling of the actual negotiations was frequently botched. Everyone wanted an agreement, but the pathway was too rocky and ill conceived.

While much of this critique is accurate in terms of identifying the shortcomings of the Oslo process, it implicitly suggests that a balanced, rapid process with both leader and popular participation was a realistic possibility in 1993. It was not. Israel's general power advantage translated into a negotiating advantage, one that Israel, like any state in that position, would not have willingly given up. Conditioning one's people is difficult without telegraphing to the other negotiating party in advance the concessions one will accept. Negotiators hold concessions close to their chests; they try not to broadcast them in public.

Furthermore, the gradualism of the Oslo process was the only approach likely to gain sufficient Israeli and Palestinian support that it could be sustained. A more rapid move to a two-state solution on the June 4, 1967, line would never have gotten off the ground. In part, the gradualism itself makes possible the post hoc view that Oslo was too gradual. Everyone has come to expect much more than what, in 1993, seemed like a monumental leap. In other words, the Oslo breakthrough conditioned people on both sides to expect much more—a more lasting rapprochement—and therefore makes the initial approach seem misguided.

This explanation has mostly focused on the Israeli-Palestinian track, but the Israeli-Syrian process may also have suffered. First, the competition for Israeli and US attention between the two negotiating tracks slowed the talks. The best example was probably in August 1993 when Rabin weighed talks with Syria against the Oslo track and chose the latter at the (temporary) expense of the former. Second, Israel and Syria did not engage in consistent high-level negotiations. Months often went by without much interaction. The United States could have done more to speed up the Israeli-Syrian process, a claim that carries over to the next explanation.

Despite some limitations, then, the wide array of procedural mistakes and political decisions is the best explanation of the failure to reach agreements. Israelis, Palestinians, and Syrians were close, but they tripped themselves up, and the United States, the central mediator, failed to steer them in the right diplomatic direction on too many occasions. The problems were not just at Camp David or Geneva in 2000 but ran throughout the entire period. In the next section, I address the US failings more specifically. But while I treat the second and third explanations separately, they fit together quite well.

The United States Was Too Passive

The United States failed to do its job as mediator, facilitator, and enforcer. The United States failed to monitor the parties and sanction actors who did not uphold their agreed-upon commitments. During Clinton's first term, William Quandt argues, Washington could have forced the pace of all the negotiations rather than letting the talks drag and risk squandering a window of opportunity. He further claims that the United States did not always press Netanyahu when the Israeli government was ambivalent about the Oslo process.[36] The United States convened meetings at the highest level only to see them fail at Shepherdstown, Geneva, and Camp David. By the time the top leaders reached such meetings, US officials should have ensured that the odds of failure were low.

Another version of the idea that US failings stalled the drive for peace is that the United States should have coerced Israel in order to advance the process. Israel was the more powerful party, and only US efforts could counterbalance Israel's advantage and lead to an equitably structured negotiating framework. If the Oslo process failed in part because Israel could dictate the terms of the DOP and continue settlement expansion, the only leverage resided in Washington. The second alternative, then, to the gradual process as it unfolded was a process with a much stronger US role. But this is not just about the opening of the talks; it also would have required a strenuous US policy along the way to ensure success.

Still, for this to have been a viable US approach, one would have to completely ignore a core tenet of US policy: strong Israeli-US relations. As noted earlier, the United States has generally been unwilling to coerce Israel with sanctions or other material threats. Israel has many American supporters, including many elected and appointed officials, who balk at pressuring Israel and criticize presidential administrations that contemplate a coercive approach.

The Opponents of the Process Bested the Supporters

On the Israeli-Palestinian track, the peace process failed because opponents used violence to dash euphoric expectations and prevent the timely implementation of agreements. Most terrorist attacks led to a temporal delay in the negotiations and caused supporters to question where this process was really headed. Israeli settlers who rejected territorial compromise continued to build and expand, often with the support of sectors within the Israeli government. In short, opponents used political and military means to thwart the diplomatic process. Israel and certainly Palestinians are not unitary actors; those opposed to compromise have plenty of avenues for undermining the process.

On the Israeli-Syrian front, little evidence has emerged from Syria that opponents of a deal with Israel undermined Hafiz al-Asad's strategic decision for a peace. On the Israeli side, segments of the Israeli public that opposed withdrawal from the Golan Heights spoke out and used the domestic political process to build momentum against the Rabin government. In a crucial domestic political challenge, a handful of members of parliament broke with Rabin over the Golan issue.

On the Israeli-Palestinian front, violent opponents were a major impediment, but they were an impediment all parties could have expected. Actors seeking to end a conflict regularly face opponents, and they must be able to manage such challenges. To place primary blame for the negotiating failure on the heads of opponents is to let off too easily the organizers and governments. The violence was greatly damaging, but leaders need to anticipate violence and minimize the damage to the political process. In a sense, the procedural explanation is more persuasive because it subsumes the issue of addressing opposition attacks on diplomacy. Perhaps only a robust, resilient, well-managed process could have succeeded, and this is where US officials came up short. The United States is left with a good amount of material upon which to build the next time around, but Washington had hoped for much more than a recipe for future Arab-Israeli talks.

Notes

I would like to thank Robert Blecher, Arie Kacowicz, and Henry Krisch for thoughtful comments on an earlier draft. I presented a version of this chapter at the annual conference of the International Studies Association in March 2006.

1. In theory, an alternative to Soviet funding for arms would have been financial support from the Arab Gulf states. But with the end of the Cold War, those states did not step in to replace Soviet support.

2. Egypt and Israel had signed a peace treaty in 1979.

3. The multilateral negotiations included five working groups with participants from both inside and outside the Middle East: arms control and regional security, environmental issues, refugees, regional economic development, and water.

4. On Rabin's dismissive attitude, see David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accord* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), 27 and 51. On the Oslo process more generally, see Graham Usher, *Palestine in Crisis: The Struggle for Peace and Political Independence After Oslo* (London and Chicago: Pluto Press in association with Transnational Institute and Middle East Research & Information Project, 1997); Geoffrey Kemp and Jeremy Pressman, *Point of No Return: The Deadly Struggle for Middle East Peace* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997); Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days That Changed the Middle East* (New York: Random House, 1998); Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen), *Through Secret Channels* (Reading, UK: Garnet, 1995); and Yossi Beilin, *Touching Peace: From the Oslo Accord to a Final Agreement* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999).

5. Efraim Inbar, "Labor's Return to Power," in Daniel J. Elazar and Shmuel Sandler, eds., *Israel at the Polls, 1992* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 27–43, at 35.

6. Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004), 116.

7. The text of the DOP is available on the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Declaration%20of%20Principles.aspx.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. On Israeli-Syrian relations during these years, see Ross, *The Missing Peace;* Sadik al-Azm, "The View from Damascus," *New York Review of Books* 47, no. 10, June 15, 2000; and Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace: The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

11. A separate territorial regime was developed in the West Bank city of Hebron.

12. "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, Texts and Speeches, the White House, Washington, 13 September 1993," *Israel's Foreign Relations: Selected Documents,* vols. 13–14, *1992–1994,* Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel's Foreign Policy—Historical Documents, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook9/Pages/108%20Declaration%20of%20Principles%20on%20Interim%20Self-Gove.aspx.

13. http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Archive/Peace+Process/1993/Remarks+by+ PM+Yitzhak+Rabin+at+Signing+of+DOP+-+13.htm, accessed February 22, 2006.

14. The Foundation for Middle East Peace (fmep.org), citing the statistical abstract of Israel, puts the 1993 figures at 3,000 (Gaza) and 117,000 (West Bank). The foundation's

November–December 2000 report, citing Israeli Ministry of Interior officials on July 28, 2000, puts the Gaza figure for 2000 at 6,700. The foundation's September–October 2000 report puts the West Bank at 200,000. For 2000, the CIA World Factbook puts the figures at 6,500 and 171,000, respectively.

15. By "unauthorized," I mean that the Israeli government did not formally authorize them, though arms of the government provided support. To most of the world, outposts and settlements in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) are both illegal under international law.

16. The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights & the Environment (LAW), "House Demolitions Since the Oslo Agreement," http://www.lawsociety.org/Reports/reports/1998/hdlist.html.

17. "Israel, the Occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Palestinian Authority Territories," Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1999,* n.d., http://www.hrw.org/hrw/worldreport99/mideast/israel.html. See also "Israel 'Quietly Deporting' Palestinians," BBCNews.com, September 15, 1998.

18. Jeremy M. Sharp, "US Aid to the Palestinians," CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, February 2, 2006, 4, research.policyarchive.org/4316.pdf.

19. The exceptions include policies in the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration following the Suez War in 1957; the initial intent, perhaps, of the Ford administration's "reassessment" in 1975; and the Bush-Baker-Shamir loan guarantee debate in 1991–1992.

20. Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 679.

21. For more on Barak and the Israeli-Syrian process, see Jeremy Pressman, "Lost Opportunities," *Boston Review* 29, no. 6 (December 2004–January 2005), 44–46, http://bostonreview.net/BR29.6/pressman.html (book review of Dennis Ross's *The Missing Peace*). See also Charles Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams: The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1995–2002* (New York: Other Press, 2003); Frederic C. Hof, "The Line of June 4, 1967," *Middle East Insight*, September–October 1999, 17–23; and Akiva Eldar, "Who Never Misses an Opportunity to Miss an Opportunity?," *Ha'aretz,* August 12, 2003.

22. "Fatalities in the First Intifada," B'Tselem, n.d., http://www.btselem.org/English/Statistics/First_Intifada_Tables.asp, accessed January 9, 2006.

23. "New Tries for Mideast Peace," *New York Times,* October 31, 2003.

24. Jeremy Pressman, "Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba?," *International Security* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2003), 5–43. See also Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams;* Ross, *The Missing Peace;* and Clayton E. Swisher, *The Truth About Camp David: The Untold Story About the Collapse of the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Nation Books, 2004).

25. Pressman, "Visions in Collision," 17. For more on differences among the Israeli negotiators during the Oslo years, see Arie Kacowicz, "Rashomon in Jerusalem: Mapping the Israeli Negotiators' Positions on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process, 1993–2001," *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (May 2005), 252–273.

26. Jeremy Pressman, "The Second Intifada: An Early Look at the Background and Causes of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 22, no. 2 (Fall 2003), 114–141.

27. "Fatalities," http://www.btselem.org/english/Statistics/Casualties.asp, accessed December 1, 2005. The best article on the Israeli belief that force would end, not escalate, the confrontation is Ben Kaspit, "Israel is not a state that has an army but rather an army that has a state attached to it," *Ma'ariv*, September 6, 2002, pp. 8–11, 32 of Rosh Hashanah supplement; and Ben Kaspit, "The Army Will Decide and Approve," *Ma'ariv*, September 13, 2002, pp. 6–10 of sabbath supplement (in Hebrew but English translations available on the Web).

28. I have used "97 percent" as shorthand for more complex details. The plan called for 94–96 percent of the West Bank plus an additional land swap of 1–3 percent. By "land swap," the negotiators meant that a small amount of pre-1967 Israel, equal to 1–3 percent of the area of the West Bank, would be annexed by the new Palestinian state in exchange for the areas of the West Bank annexed to Israel.

29. For some of the contents of Barak's letter, see Gilead Sher, *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations, 1999–2001: Within Reach* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 206–207.

30. Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 11. For Arafat's reservations letter to Clinton, see Swisher, *The Truth About Camp David*, 399–401. The Palestinian Negotiations Support Unit (NSU) also wrote a letter. See http://www.nad-plo.org/inner.php?view=nego_nego_clinton_nclinton2p, accessed March 21, 2006.

31. Pressman, "Visions in Collision," 21–22.

32. Ibid.

33. Bruce Riedel, "Camp David—The US-Israeli Bargain," bitterlemons.org, July 15, 2002, edition 26, http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl150702ed26extra.html, accessed March 9, 2006.

34. One additional explanation is that Rabin's assassination blocked peace. In relation to the Israeli-Syrian talks, see Yoav Stern, "Report: Bishara Acted as Syria-Israel Mediator in 1990s Talks," *Ha'aretz,* March 17, 2006. Stern quotes from an interview that former Syrian vice president Abed al-Halim Haddam gave to the Israeli newspaper *A-Sinara:* "Syria was ready for peace. As for Israel, it seemed like Israel was ready for it but he [Rabin] was killed."

35. For instance, minutes from a PLO central council meeting in October 2000 revealed, according to a press report, "readiness to give up 3 percent of the West Bank in a territorial exchange, as well as readiness to recognize Israeli sovereignty in the Jewish Quarter [of Jerusalem's Old City]." The minutes asserted the right of return for refugees, but, quoting the document, "there's nothing against providing compensation" instead. Israel captured and released the document. See Akiva Eldar, "Trite of Return or the Refugees Problem," *Ha'aretz,* June 26, 2003.

36. William Quandt, *Peace Process* (Berkeley: University of California Press; and Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 339 and 352.

CHAPTER 12

GEORGE W. BUSH, BARACK OBAMA, AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Robert O. Freedman

The Barack Obama administration's approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict from 2009 to 2017 was both similar to and different from the approach of the George W. Bush administration from 2001 to 2009. This chapter will analyze the policies of the two administrations and emphasize the one outcome they had in common: a failure to solve the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

GEORGE W. BUSH AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The George W. Bush administration's policy toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict moved through six distinct stages. First, from the inauguration until 9/11, Bush was generally supportive of Israel while distancing his administration from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Second, from 9/11 to June 2002, the Bush administration actively sought to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to build Muslim support for his war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and the coming war against Iraq. The third stage, from June 2002 to Yasser Arafat's death in November 2004, witnessed periodic attempts by the United States to facilitate an Israeli-Palestinian settlement; the "Road Map" of April 2003 was the best example. A policy calling for the democratization of the Arab world as a means of preventing terrorism was also developed. The fourth period, from November 2004 to the Hamas election victory in January 2006, witnessed an attempt to boost Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas, while coordinating with Israel's plan for a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. The fifth stage, from January 2006 to June 2007, was marked by increasing difficulties for the United States in Iraq, which drew the administration's attention away from the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the same time, the United States encountered problems with its democratization program in the Arab world. To make matters worse, the United States found itself confronted with increasing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and, in the summer of 2006, a war between Israel and Hizbollah. The final stage, from July 2007 to January 2009, witnessed a final, unsuccessful effort by the Bush administration to achieve a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement, highlighted by the November 2007 Annapolis conference.

From the Inauguration to 9/11

When the Bush administration took office in 2001, it had a number of reasons not to continue President Bill Clinton's activist policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. First, Bush had witnessed the major effort Clinton had made and the relatively meager results he had achieved. Bush also wanted to distinguish himself from Clinton and so chose not to follow Clinton's path. Finally, Bush was unwilling to risk his limited political capital (he had won a very narrow victory in a hotly disputed election) and wanted to save it for more promising policy initiatives, such as tax cuts and antiballistic missile programs. As a result, the administration distanced itself from the Arab-Israeli conflict, as shown when Dennis Ross, who had been the special US mediator for the Arab-Israeli conflict, resigned in January 2001 and was not replaced.

Distancing itself from the Arab-Israeli conflict—and the ongoing al-Aqsa *intifada*—did not, however, mean that the administration distanced itself from Israel. On the contrary, much to the discomfiture of Arafat and other Arab leaders, Bush quickly developed a close and warm relationship with Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, who was invited to visit the White House in mid-March 2001.

On the eve of Sharon's visit, the new American secretary of state, Colin Powell, gave a major speech supportive of Israel to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), a pro-Israel lobbying organization. In the speech he echoed Israel's position that the starting point for peace talks had to be the end of violence. In a clear slap at Arafat, Powell publicly stated that "leaders have the responsibility to denounce violence, strip it of legitimacy [and] stop it." Powell also asserted the Bush administration's position that the United States would assist in negotiations but would not impose a peace agreement.[1]

The one bit of American activism on the peace process during this period came following the publication of the Mitchell Report, which examined the causes of the second *intifada,* in mid-May. The report contained a series of recommendations for ending the rapidly escalating Israeli-Palestinian conflict, first and foremost "a 100 percent effort to stop the violence."[2] While Israel accepted the recommendation and Sharon ordered a cease-fire, a series of Palestinian terrorist attacks that Arafat either could not or would not stop undermined the cease-fire. Visits by the new assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, Nicholas Burns; CIA chief George Tenet; and Powell himself failed to resuscitate the cease-fire.[3] Indeed, the escalating violence was now punctuated by Palestinian suicide bombings against Israeli civilian targets such as pizza parlors and discotheques, attacks that were strongly denounced by the United States. It is quite possible that the Bush administration, having witnessed the failure of its one major activist effort to resuscitate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, concluded that its original hands-off policy toward the conflict was the correct one and distanced itself from the conflict. All of this, of course, would change after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

From 9/11 to June 2002

Immediately after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the United States changed its hands-off policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and sought to build a coalition that included Muslim states against Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'ida. In an effort to gain Arab support, the United States announced its support of a Palestinian state and exercised a considerable amount of pressure on Sharon to agree to a meeting between Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres and Arafat to establish yet another cease-fire, even though Palestinian violence had not stopped—the price Sharon had demanded for talks. Frustrated by this US policy, Sharon called it the equivalent of British and French policy at the 1938 Munich conference, where Czechoslovakia had been sold out to the Nazis. His comments were deemed "unacceptable" by the White House press secretary, Ari Fleischer.[4]

This would be the low point in the US-Israeli relationship under Bush. Following its rapid military victory in Afghanistan, the United States embarked on a twofold strategy. The first part, trying to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, was warmly greeted by US European allies and by pro-US governments in the Arab world. However, the second part of the strategy, threatening to carry the war from Afghanistan to other supporters of terror, especially Iraq, met with far less support.

The US effort to invigorate the Israeli-Palestine peace process began with a speech by President Bush at the United Nations in November 2001 in which he said, "We are working for the day when two states—Israel and Palestine—live peacefully together within secure and recognized boundaries." However, in a clear warning to Arafat to crack down on terrorists, he also added, "Peace will come when all have sworn off forever incitement, violence, and terror. There is no such thing as a good terrorist."[5] Bush also pointedly did not meet Arafat at the United Nations. As his national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, noted: "You cannot help us with al-Qa'ida, and hug Hizbollah or Hamas. And so the President makes that clear to Mr. Arafat."[6] The United States backed up Rice's words by adding Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hizbollah to its post–September 11 terrorist list.

The next step in the US peace effort came on November 19 with a major speech by Secretary of State Colin Powell on America's view of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[7] In his speech Powell strongly condemned Palestinian terrorism, noting that the al-Aqsa *intifada* was now mired in "self-defeating violence." He also stated that although the United States believed that there should be a two-state solution to the conflict—with Palestine and Israel living side by side within secure and recognized borders—"the Palestinians must make a 100 percent effort to stop terrorism, and that this effort required actions, not words: Terrorists must be arrested." Powell emphasized that "no wrong can ever justify the murder of the innocent," that terror and violence must cease immediately, and that the Palestinians must realize their goals through negotiations, not violence. He further asserted—possibly in response to Arafat's call for the return to Israel of more than three million Palestinian refugees, which would upset Israel's demographic balance—that the Palestinians must accept the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state. Powell also indicated that Israel had to make concessions for peace to be possible, even as he emphasized that the United States and Israel were closely "bound together by democratic tradition" and that the United States had an "enduring and ironclad commitment to Israeli security." These concessions included a stop to settlement expansion and an end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which "causes humiliation and the killing of innocents."

In order to implement the US vision of peace outlined by Powell, in addition to promises of economic aid, Assistant Secretary of State William Burns and former Marine general Anthony Zinni were dispatched to meet with Israeli and Palestinian delegations to reach a cease-fire that would lay the basis for the resumption of peace negotiations. To facilitate the Zinni mission, President Bush put his personal prestige on the line by writing to five important Arab leaders—King Abdullah II of Jordan, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, King Mohammed VI of Morocco, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah (who had publicly praised Powell's speech), and President Ben-Ali of Tunisia—asking for their help in persuading "the Palestinian leadership to take action to end violence and get the peace process back on track."[8]

On November 27, soon after Zinni's arrival in the Middle East, two Palestinian terrorists, one of whom was a member of Arafat's Fatah organization (the other was from Islamic Jihad), killed three Israelis and wounded thirty others in Afulah, a town in northern Israel. Zinni responded to the violence in a balanced way: "This is why we need a cease-fire. Both sides have suffered too much."[9] Zinni then met with Arafat, asking him to end the violence, but even as they were meeting, Palestinian gunmen fired at the Israeli Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo from the neighboring Palestinian suburb of Beit Jala—despite an explicit promise by Palestinian leaders not to do so.[10] The next day three more Israelis were killed as a suicide bomber attacked a public bus near the Israeli city of Hadera.[11] This time Zinni's response was much stronger: "The groups that do this are clearly trying to make my mission fail. There's no justification, no rationale, no sets of conditions that will ever make terrorist acts a right way to respond."[12] Zinni's words, however, did not stem the tide of terrorism. Two days later suicide bombers killed ten Israeli teenagers who had gathered at the Ben Yehudah pedestrian mall in Jerusalem. This time Arafat condemned the attacks, stressing not the loss of life by Israel but the negative political effect the suicide bombers were having on the Palestinian world image.[13]

Zinni was furious, as he saw his mission literally going up in flames: "Those responsible for planning and carrying out these attacks must be found and brought to justice. This is an urgent task and there can be no delay or excuses for not acting decisively. The deepest evil one can imagine is to attack young people and children."[14] President Bush, whose prestige had been put on the line by the Zinni mission, also responded strongly: "Now more than ever Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority must demonstrate through their actions, and not merely their words, their commitment to fight terror."[15]

Arafat seemed to get the message, if belatedly. On December 16, he called for an immediate cease-fire, condemning both suicide attacks and the launching of mortar attacks.[16] Nonetheless, the Palestinian leader did not root out the Hamas and Islamic Jihad organizations from Gaza and the West Bank; rather, he negotiated a tenuous truce with them (a tactic later repeated by Mahmoud Abbas in March 2005). This was clearly unsatisfactory to the Israeli government. Arafat was kept penned up in Ramallah by Israeli tanks, and in a further blow to his prestige, he was prohibited from leaving his compound to attend Christmas services in Bethlehem.

Three weeks after Arafat's call for a cease-fire, Israeli forces captured a ship in the Red Sea, the *Karine A*, which held fifty tons of concealed weapons, including C-4 explosives and Katyusha rockets—clearly weapons of terrorism. Arafat's initial denial that the Palestinian Authority had anything to do with the vessel further undermined his credibility, both in Israel and in the United States.[17] In response to heavy pressure by the United States, Arafat eventually arrested several of the Palestinian officials involved, including a major general in his own security forces and an officer in the Palestinian Authority's naval police.[18]

Meanwhile, Hamas broke the truce by attacking an Israeli military outpost in Gaza, killing four soldiers and claiming the attack was in retaliation for Israel's seizure of the *Karine A*.[19] Israel retaliated, destroying, among other things, the runway of the Palestinian airport in Gaza, and after a terrorist attack against an Israeli bar mitzvah party in Hadera, in which six Israelis were killed and thirty wounded, Israel blew up the main Palestinian radio transmitter.[20]

Thus ended the first year of the Bush administration's efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinian terrorism, which Arafat was unable, or more likely unwilling, to control (he had long used terrorism as a political weapon) had sabotaged major US efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2001. Nonetheless, efforts to find a solution to the conflict continued into 2002. In March, Bush sent his vice president, Dick Cheney, who often took a much harder line than Powell, to the Arab world in an effort to build support for a planned US attack on Iraq. Cheney was met with strong Arab calls for the United States to work out a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before engaging in a war with Iraq. This position apparently convinced President Bush to send Zinni back for another try at achieving a cease-fire. To facilitate the Zinni visit, Sharon made a major concession by lifting his demand for the passage of seven days without violence before talks could resume. The atmosphere of Zinni's visit was further improved by the announcement of an Arab-Israeli peace plan suggested by Saudi Arabia. This plan would be introduced at the Arab summit scheduled for the end of March in Beirut and involved Arab recognition of Israel in return for Israel's return to its 1967 boundaries and a fair solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. To help reinforce the momentum for peace, the United States pushed for a new UN Security Council resolution, Resolution 1397, on March 13, 2002, which called for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the end of violence, incitement, and terrorism; and the resumption of negotiations based on the Tenet and Mitchell plans.[21]

Unfortunately, the diplomatic momentum for peace was shattered by another series of Palestinian terrorist attacks just as Zinni was seeking to consolidate a cease-fire and the Arab summit was taking place in Beirut. On March 27, the first night of the Passover holiday, twenty-nine Jews were murdered and more than one hundred wounded at a Passover Seder in the coastal resort town of Netanya. This attack was followed by suicide bombings in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa over the next three days, bombings that killed seventeen people and wounded eighty-four. These events precipitated an Israeli attack on Arafat's compound in Ramallah, followed by a sweep into the major Palestinian cities of the West Bank, in what Sharon called Operation Defensive Shield.

As these events were unfolding, the United States at first strongly backed Israel, with Powell noting, "Sharon made concessions, while Arafat backed terrorism."[22] Then mass demonstrations broke out in the Arab world, which likely worried Bush as he stepped up his preparations for an attack on Iraq. In a major speech on April 4, 2002, after first denouncing terrorism and noting that "the chairman of the Palestinian Authority has not consistently opposed or confronted terrorists nor has he renounced terror as he agreed to do at Oslo," Bush called for the Israelis to withdraw from the West Bank cities they were occupying.[23] Bush also announced that he was sending Powell to the Middle East to work out a cease-fire. Several days later, the president urged the Israelis to withdraw "without delay," but then he ran into a firestorm of domestic criticism for pressuring Israel.[24] Neoconservatives, who were the intellectual lifeblood of the administration, attacked Bush for urging Sharon to withdraw, claiming the Israeli leader was fighting terrorism just as the United States was fighting terrorism after 9/11. Evangelical Christians, a large and energetic base of Bush's core constituency, also attacked Bush for pressuring Israel.[25] On April 15, 250,000 people rallied for Israel on the Mall in Washington, DC, a demonstration organized by the US Jewish community; the demonstration also included evangelical Christians among its speakers. The message of the rally was that the United States should support Israel's fight against Palestinian terrorism, which was similar to the antiterrorist policy of the United States after 9/11. Finally, the administration was severely criticized by influential members of Congress, including Republican House majority leader Tom DeLay, a strong friend of Israel.[26]

Another factor prompting Bush to change his position was Arafat's continued sponsorship of terrorism. When Arafat's wife came out in support of suicide bombings as a legitimate form of resistance against Israeli occupation, and the Israelis gave the United States documents showing that Arafat had not only tolerated terrorism but had helped finance it, Bush further turned against the Palestinian leader. On May 26, while on a state visit to Russia, Bush noted that Arafat "hasn't delivered. He had a chance to secure the peace as a result of the hard work of President Clinton and he didn't. He had a chance to fight terrorism and he hadn't."[27]

As Palestinian terrorist attacks continued to proliferate, Sharon, who had pulled Israeli forces out of the cities of the West Bank in May 2002, sent them back in June, this time with minimal criticism from the United States. Indeed, in a major speech on June 24, Bush called for a "new and different Palestinian leadership" so that a Palestinian state could be born.[28] While Bush chided the Israelis somewhat on settlement activity, the brunt of the president's ire was clearly directed at Arafat. With this speech Bush formally joined Sharon in ruling out Arafat as a partner in the peace process.

US Policy from June 2002 to Arafat's Death in November 2004

Following the June 24 speech, US foreign policy in the Middle East had two main objectives. The first was to work with the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations as part of a "diplomatic quartet" to fashion a "Road Map" leading to a Palestinian-Israeli peace settlement. The second was to build a large coalition to prepare for war with Iraq.

In designing the Road Map with the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations, the Bush administration faced a major problem. Although the United States had written off Arafat as a suitable partner for peace, as had Israel, the other three members of the Quartet had not, and this discrepancy caused problems in subsequent diplomacy. In addition, the presentation of the Road Map, which the Quartet began planning in July 2002, was delayed on numerous occasions and was not made public until after the completion of the major combat phase of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq at the end of March 2003. As a result, many Middle East observers felt that the Road Map was aimed at merely assuaging the Arabs while the Bush administration was preparing to attack Iraq.

Following delays on account of the Israeli elections of January 2003 (in which Sharon's Likud Party scored an impressive victory) and the invasion of Iraq, which began in late March, the Road Map was finally published, with great fanfare, on April 30, 2003. At the time, it appeared that Bush, spurred on by his ally, British prime minister Tony Blair, wanted to prove his critics wrong by demonstrating that he was genuinely interested in an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. According to the Road Map, the Palestinians, in phase one of the three-phase plan leading to a Palestinian state, had to "declare an unequivocal end to violence and terrorism and end incitement against Israel and undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt, and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning attacks on Israelis anywhere."[29] Second, the Palestinians had to appoint an "empowered" prime minister, establish a government based on a strong parliamentary democracy and cabinet, and have only three security services, which would report to the empowered prime minister. By these measures, the United States hoped to weaken, if not eliminate, Arafat's power base and in his place create an "empowered" prime minister who would be a proper partner for peace. For its part, Israel, under phase one of the Road Map, had to refrain from deporting Palestinians, attacking Palestinian civilians, and confiscating or demolishing Palestinian homes and property. And as the "comprehensive security performance" of the Palestinians moved forward, the Israeli military had to "withdraw progressively" from areas occupied since September 28, 2000, dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001, and "freeze all settlement activity [including natural growth of settlements]."

With Bush at the peak of his international influence as a result of the apparent military victory in Iraq, Arafat was compelled to create the post of prime minister to which senior Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, was appointed. Yet this appointment appeared to be a ploy; it soon became evident that Mahmoud Abbas was not the "empowered" prime minister the United States had in mind, since Arafat retained control over most of the Palestinian security forces. Apparently the United States had overlooked this fact in the hope that Abbas, who, unlike Arafat, had never been demonized by either Sharon or the Israeli public, had sufficient power to be a credible negotiating partner for Israel. Although the Palestinian Authority accepted the Road Map, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and the Tanzim (young militants tied to Arafat's Fatah organization) did not. Israel, albeit with a number of reservations, also accepted it.

Initially the Road Map was greeted with optimism, and on June 29, 2003, Abbas succeeded in eliciting a ninety-day *hudna*, or truce, from the leaders of Hamas, the Tanzim, and Islamic Jihad, though not from the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. Although Israeli military leaders worried that terrorist groups would use the ninety-day period to rebuild their forces and armaments, Sharon proved willing to take a chance on the *hudna*. He called for withdrawing Israeli forces from northern Gaza and Bethlehem; closing some checkpoints hindering traffic between Palestinian villages and cities; shutting down some illegal outposts on the West Bank (although other outposts were set up); releasing some Palestinian prisoners (though far fewer than the Palestinians wanted); and loosening work restrictions on Palestinians.

President Bush sought to move the peace process forward by meeting with both Abbas and Sharon in Washington in July 2003, but differences over Israel's construction of its security wall proved to be problematic during these talks.[30] Meanwhile, attacks on Israel continued during the *hudna*, including the murder of Israeli civilians, albeit at a significantly decreased level from before the *hudna*. Abbas did work to lessen anti-Israeli incitement, painting over some of the anti-Israel slogans displayed on walls in Gaza. However, the key demand of both Bush and the Israelis—that Mahmoud Abbas crack down on the terrorists—was not met, primarily because Arafat refused to allow it. Nonetheless, Abbas tried to convince the United States that he could negotiate a permanent truce with the terrorist groups. While some in the US State Department seemed to be willing to go along with Abbas, Sharon was not, and as attacks on Israelis continued during the *hudna*, Sharon decided to retaliate by attacking the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists who were seen as responsible. Then, on August 19, less than two months into the *hudna*, a terrorist attack in Jerusalem killed twenty-one Israelis, including a number of children. In response, Sharon stepped up his attacks on the terrorists, which led Hamas to declare an end to the *hudna*. Soon afterward, blaming both Arafat and Israel for a lack of support, Abbas resigned and the peace process again came to a halt.

In the aftermath of Abbas's resignation, with the peace process stalled, the Bush administration again distanced itself from the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and concentrated instead on the deteriorating situation in Iraq. Bush did, however, begin to push a policy of democratization for the Middle East. Influenced by Israeli politician Natan Sharansky's book *The Case for Democracy*,[31] Bush argued that there were two major reasons why the United States should push to democratize the Middle East. One, if young men had a chance to participate politically in their societies by joining political parties, demonstrating in the streets for their political positions, enjoying freedom of the press, and playing a role in choosing their nation's leaders through fair elections, they would be less likely to become terrorists. Two, democracies were less likely to fight each other than autocratic or totalitarian states. Thus, the administration's reasoning went, if the Middle East became more democratic it would be less likely to spawn terrorists and would be a more peaceful region of the world. Bush's democratization policy also benefited Israel. As the only genuine democracy in the region (with the partial exception of Turkey, which was to become increasingly authoritarian over the next decade), Israel was not only an antiterrorist ally of the United States but a democratic one as well.

While Bush was formulating his democratization policy, Sharon was developing a new strategy of his own—unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. This was conceived in part as an initiative to prevent other diplomatic efforts from being imposed on Israel (such as Yossi Beilin's Geneva initiative),[32] and in part to preserve Israel as both a Jewish and a democratic state by ending Israeli control over the approximately 1.4 million Palestinian Arabs living in the Gaza Strip.[33] At the same time, Sharon made a major effort to speed up construction of the Israeli security fence between Israel and the West Bank to prevent Palestinian terrorist attacks on Israel. The fence, however, did not run along the old 1967 border but took in a swath of land on the West Bank. By early 2004 the United States and Israel began detailed bargaining on the unilateral withdrawal policy and the security fence, and under US pressure (and that of the Israeli Supreme Court), Sharon agreed to move the security fence closer to the 1949 armistice line. Sharon also agreed to include four settlements in the northern part of the West Bank in his disengagement plan.[34]

The result of this bargaining was a meeting between Sharon and Bush in Washington in mid-April 2004. It was structured not only to reinforce the Sharon disengagement initiative but also to help each leader politically. Bush went a very long way toward supporting Sharon's policies. Not only did he welcome Sharon's disengagement plan as "real progress" and assert that the United States was "strongly committed" to Israel's well-being as a Jewish state within "secure and defensible borders," but he also went on to reject any Palestinian right of return to Israel: "It seems clear that an agreed just, fair, and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel."[35] Bush also reinforced Israel's position that it would not fully return to the 1949 armistice lines and that any final agreement would have to reflect the settlements Israel had built since 1967: "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." Finally, Bush reaffirmed Israel's right to self-defense against terrorism, noting that "Israel will retain its right to defend itself against terrorism including taking action against terrorist organizations." This statement not only endorsed Israel's right to go back into Gaza to fight terrorism but also implicitly endorsed Israel's strategy of assassinating the leaders of Hamas, a process that continued during the spring and summer of 2004.

In his meeting with Sharon, Bush also made a number of gestures to the Palestinians. Not only did he reaffirm his commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and call for Israel to freeze settlement activity and remove unauthorized outposts, but he also put limits on Israel's security wall, asserting, "As the government of Israel has stated, the barrier being erected by Israel should be a security rather than a political barrier, should be temporary, and therefore not prejudice any final status issues including final borders, and its route should take into account, consistent with security needs, its impact on Palestinians not engaged in terrorist activities." Nonetheless, returning to the theme he had emphasized since 9/11, Bush demanded that the Palestinians "act decisively against terror, including sustained, targeted, and effective operations to stop terrorism and dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure."

Clearly Sharon had scored a great diplomatic success with his visit. Seven months later, Arafat, seen by both the United States and Israel as the main obstacle to an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, died. Arafat's death set the stage for another US attempt to revive the Arab-Israeli peace process.

US Policy from Arafat's Death to the Hamas Victory in the Palestinian Elections

In the aftermath of Arafat's death and Bush's reelection in November 2004, US policy in the Middle East initially appeared to improve. First, the promotion of Condoleezza Rice to US secretary of state added coherence to US policy, as the old rifts among the State Department, the White House, and the Defense Department were minimized. In addition, as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's influence declined because of the United States' increased problems in Iraq, Rice became the unquestioned administration spokesperson on foreign policy, especially on the Middle East.

Second, the US democratization plan for the Middle East appeared to score some major triumphs with democratic elections being held in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority. The PA held an election—one considered by international observers to be fair and democratic—to choose Yasser Arafat's successor. Mahmoud Abbas, the Fatah leader who had served a brief term as Palestinian prime minister under the Road Map, was elected with 60 percent of the votes. Abbas was an appealing candidate for the United States because of his regular denunciation of terrorism as inimical to Palestinian interests. Thus, with Abbas' election, the two main strands of US post-9/11 Middle East policy—the fight against terrorism and support for democratization—came together, and it was not long before Abbas was welcomed to the White

House with full pomp and ceremony, a privilege that had been denied to Arafat. Sharon also made a series of gestures to Abbas in February 2005, including the release of seven hundred Palestinian detainees and agreement to a cease-fire.

While US-Palestinian relations got off to a good start after Abbas was elected, the new Palestinian leader took a risky gamble in March 2005. To achieve harmony among the contending Palestinian forces, he signed an agreement with Hamas and several other Palestinian organizations (but not Islamic Jihad) providing that, in return for a cease-fire with Israel, the only mode of interaction among the Palestinians would be "dialogue."[36] This agreement ran counter to Israeli and American calls for Abbas to crack down on Hamas and the other Palestinian terrorist organizations. This issue became particularly pressing as Israel prepared to disengage from Palestinian territories during the summer of 2005, pulling Israeli settlements and military forces out of Gaza as well as Israeli settlements out of the northern West Bank. While Hamas had signed the cease-fire agreement, Islamic Jihad had not, and there were concerns that the Iranian-supported organization might disrupt the Israeli disengagement. While this disruption never materialized, Islamic Jihad did undertake a number of terrorist attacks against Israel in 2005, and the Israeli government responded with "targeted killings" (assassinations) of Islamic Jihad operatives.

The main problem for Israel, however, was Hamas, and unless Abbas moved against the Islamic organization, Israel would not take him seriously as a peace partner. Abbas, however, appeared more interested in creating Palestinian solidarity than in satisfying Israel. Indeed, in responding to my question in June 2005 in Ramallah about why he had chosen not to crack down on Hamas after his strong victory in the Palestinian presidential elections, Abbas replied, "What, and have a Palestinian civil war!"[37] Unfortunately for Abbas, two years later, when Abbas was much weaker and Hamas much stronger, the Palestinian civil war between Fatah and Hamas did occur.

Despite Abbas's failure to crack down on Hamas, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice sought to facilitate cooperation between Israel and the Abbas-led Palestinian Authority as the disengagement took place. She helped to negotiate a number of agreements between Israel and the PA, including one to haul away debris from the destroyed Jewish settlements (the PA had demanded their destruction), another on the modus operandi of the crossing points between Gaza and Egypt and between Gaza and Israel, and a third agreement on travel between Gaza and the West Bank. The disengagement went relatively smoothly, despite the protests of Jewish settlers in Gaza.

The next issue to arise was the election for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Abbas had postponed the elections from their original July 2004 date to January 2006, in part so he could get political credit for the Israeli withdrawal, and in part because he could not settle the rifts between the old and young guards of his Fatah organization. A key issue in the elections was whether Hamas would run and, if so, under what conditions. Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon initially opposed Hamas participation in the elections, citing the Oslo Accord requirement that no "racist" party could run in the elections; since Hamas continued to call for the destruction of Israel, it was clearly racist. Only if Hamas renounced terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist should it be allowed to run, Sharon asserted.

The United States, however, took a contrary position. In part because forbidding Hamas to participate would hurt the US democratization plan for the Middle East, and in part because Abbas had promised to finally crack down on Hamas after the PLC elections, Rice pressured Sharon to allow Hamas participation. The Israeli leader, perhaps preoccupied with domestic politics (he had broken away from his Likud Party and formed the new Kadima Party in November 2005, four months before the Israeli parliamentary elections), gave in to the US pressure. It was a decision that both the United States and Israel would come to regret.[38]

US Policy from the Hamas Electoral Victory to Its Seizure of Gaza

Capitalizing on Fatah's corruption, the PA's inability to provide law and order in the West Bank, and the continued divisions between Fatah's old and young guards, Hamas swept to a massive victory in the January 25, 2006, PLC elections. Hamas representatives were quick to claim that their victory was due to their policy of resistance against Israel.[39] The Hamas victory created a major dilemma for the United States, as its two main policies in the Middle East—the war against terror and support for democratization—had now come into direct conflict with each other. A terrorist organization, Hamas, utilizing democratic means, had taken control of the Palestinian legislature, and a Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, had become the new Palestinian prime minister.

Meanwhile Israel faced another challenge: Sharon, who had suffered a massive stroke in early January 2006, was no longer Israel's prime minister. His replacement, as acting prime minister, was his Kadima colleague Ehud Olmert, who not only had to prepare his new party for the March 28 Israeli elections but also had to deal with the Hamas election victory. Olmert quickly decided Israel would have nothing to do with Hamas unless it changed its policies toward Israel, a position embraced by most of the Israeli political spectrum. Rice quickly convened the Quartet (the United States, the EU, the UN, and Russia), which agreed not to have any dealings with the Hamas-led Palestinian government until Hamas renounced terrorism, agreed to recognize Israel, and acceded to the agreements signed between Israel and the PLO, including Oslo I, Oslo II, and the Road Map. Russia, however, soon broke with the Quartet consensus by inviting a Hamas delegation for an official visit to Moscow. In April 2006, the United States and the EU, seeing no change in Hamas policy, decided to cut all aid to the PA except "humanitarian" assistance, but Russia again broke ranks with its Quartet colleagues by offering the PA economic assistance.

The newly elected Israeli government led by Olmert refused to have anything to do either with Abbas (who was considered ineffectual) or with the Hamas-led Palestinian government. For its part, the new Hamas government repeated its refusal to recognize Israel or make peace with it, and supported, as "legitimate resistance," continued attacks on Israel like Qassem rockets fired from Gaza into Israel or suicide bombings such as the one on April 17, 2005, which claimed ten Israeli lives.[40]

Meanwhile, Israel also faced a rising threat from Iran. After two years of on-and-off negotiations with the European Union over its secret nuclear program, Iran broke off negotiations in August 2005 and announced it was moving ahead with nuclear enrichment. Making matters worse for Israel, which along with the United States feared that Iran was on the path to developing nuclear weapons, the newly elected Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, called for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and declared that the Holocaust was a myth.[41] While the United States was highly supportive of Israel in the face of the Iranian leader's provocative statements, the Israeli leadership had to question whether the United States, increasingly bogged down in both Iraq and Afghanistan, would act to eliminate the nuclear threat from Iran, or whether Israel would have to do the job itself.

During this time, Israel's relations with the Hamas-led Palestinian government continued to deteriorate, with stepped-up shelling of Israeli territory from Gaza and Israeli retaliation. In the summer of 2006, full-scale war broke out, first with Hamas and then with Hizbollah following the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers. In looking at US-Israeli relations during both conflicts, we find a number of similarities. The Bush administration deemed both Hamas and Hizbollah to be terrorist organizations linked to Syria and Iran and, as such, enemies of the United States. Consequently, when Israel was fighting both terrorist organizations, it was on the same side of the barricades as the United States, and the United States adopted a strongly pro-Israeli position in both conflicts.

In the Israeli-Hizbollah war, however, there was one additional factor that influenced US policy. The anti-Syrian Fuad Siniora government, which had come into office in Lebanon following the departure of Syrian forces in 2005, was seen as an ally of the United States and one of the few remaining successes of its democratization program. Consequently the United States sought to ensure that if the Israeli-Hizbollah fighting did not enhance Siniora's position, by weakening Hizbollah, at least it would not hurt it. Thus, for the first two weeks of the war, the United States gave full diplomatic backing to Israel, hoping it would destroy Hizbollah, the Siniora government's main opposition. However, in late July, after an Israeli attack in Qana aimed at a Hizbollah bunker accidentally killed sixty Lebanese civilians,[42] it had become clear that Israeli dependence on its air force to deal with Hizbollah was not working and that Siniora's position was being threatened by the growing popularity of Hizbollah, which was successfully "standing up to Israel."[43] This situation also negatively affected the governments of US allies Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Consequently the United States began to work for a cease-fire, and the result was UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which called for moving the Lebanese army to the Israeli border and expanding the UN troops in southern Lebanon to fifteen thousand. Israel was less than happy with the cease-fire because it did not lead to the disarming of Hizbollah or to a cessation of Syria's transfer of weapons to Hizbollah.

In the aftermath of the Israeli-Hizbollah war, Secretary of State Rice, who had originally spoken of a "new Middle East" emerging from the conflict, sought to build on the fears of rising Iranian influence in the region following the political victory of Iran's ally, Hizbollah. She tried to construct an anti-Iranian Sunni Arab bloc of Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates and to align it with Israel against Iran and its allies Hizbollah and Hamas. Helping Rice in this project was Saudi Arabia's decision to revive the 2002 Arab peace plan, which offered Arab state recognition of Israel if it withdrew to its pre-1967 war boundaries and agreed to a "fair" settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem.

The Israeli-Palestinian talks got an unexpected boost in June 2007, when Hamas seized Gaza and Fatah cracked down on Hamas in the West Bank. The Hamas seizure of Gaza was a blow to Palestinian unity, but it gave the Bush administration the opportunity to make the West Bank a showcase while Gaza, under a tightening Israeli blockade because of Hamas rocket fire and the continued imprisonment of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who had been captured in 2006, would stagnate. Thus the United States began a major program of economic aid to the West Bank and stepped up its efforts to train Fatah's West Bank security forces, a policy continued by Bush's successor, Barack Obama. At the same time the Bush administration promised Israel $30 billion in military assistance over the next decade and pledged to maintain Israeli's qualitative military edge over its Middle Eastern enemies.[44] However, the Bush administration not only refused to attack Iran's nuclear installations but also opposed an Israeli attack on Iran, even though Iran's leaders were rejecting International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) requests for information about the possible weaponization of Iran's nuclear fuel, which Iran was continuing to enrich despite opposition from the United States, the European Union, and the IAEA.[45]

As the Bush administration was seeking to strengthen Abbas's Fatah-led West Bank economically and militarily, it was also seeking to build an anti-Iranian coalition of forces, primarily made up of Sunni Arabs, to support a renewed effort to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. In November 2007 the Bush administration convened a major international conference at Annapolis, Maryland, bringing together the leading Arab states (including Syria), the Quartet, and representatives of the World Bank and the Islamic Conference, along with Israeli leader Ehud Olmert and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas. The purpose of the conference was to give an Arab and international imprimatur for the renewed peace talks, thereby giving Abbas additional political cover against Hamas.

In order to expedite the negotiations that followed the convening of the conference, Rice made numerous trips to the Middle East, and, according to Bush in his memoirs, *Decision Points*, Olmert made a very significant offer to Abbas covering the central issues in the conflict, under which (1) Israel would return the "vast majority" of the West Bank to the Palestinians, (2) a tunnel would be built linking the West Bank and Gaza, (3) a limited number of refugees would return to Israel, with the rest of the returning refugees going to the new Palestinian state, (4) Jerusalem would be the joint capital of both Israel and the Palestinians, and (5) the holy places would be administered by a panel of "nonpolitical elders." According to Bush, Olmert was to travel to Washington and deposit the offer with the US president. Abbas would then announce that the plan was in line with Palestinian interests, and Bush would convene the two leaders to finalize the deal.[46]

Unfortunately, the deal was not consummated. Bush blamed the fact that Olmert was under investigation on a series of corruption charges, and Abbas did not want an agreement with an outgoing Israeli prime minister.[47] There is some truth to Bush's assertion—Olmert was forced to step down as prime minister and Israel's foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, became acting prime minister; when Livni proved unable to put together a ruling coalition, new Israeli elections were set for February 2009. But there was more to the story than Olmert's weakness. After the defeat of his forces in Gaza, Abbas was also seen as a weak leader, while by the time of the Annapolis conference Bush, with Congress now controlled by the Democrats and facing continued difficulties in Iraq and a renewed insurgency in Afghanistan, was very much a lame duck president.

While Olmert and Abbas negotiated, the border between Israel and Gaza heated up. A Hamas-Israel cease-fire had become increasingly shaky, and by the end of November 2008 Hamas forces had begun to fire volleys of rockets into Israel, making life in Israeli regions north and east of Gaza increasingly difficult for Israeli civilians. By the end of December 2008, Israel had decided on a policy of massive retaliation for the Hamas rocket attacks, and it mounted a major invasion of Gaza under the code name Operation Cast Lead. Unlike the Israeli-Hizbollah war, where the United States, after the first two weeks, had pressured Israel to stop fighting in order to preserve the pro-Western Siniora government, this time Israel was fighting Hamas, an organization on the US terrorist list. Consequently the United States gave Israel its full backing. This was to be the last Middle East policy decision taken by the Bush administration.

OBAMA'S FIRST TERM AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

One of the Obama administration's first acts after taking office was to appoint former US senator George Mitchell as special envoy to the Arab-Israeli peace process. Mitchell had previously served as the mediator of the Northern Ireland peace agreement and had also played a role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The appointment demonstrated Obama's serious interest in achieving an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. A major challenge to Obama's peace process efforts, however, came less than a month after he took office. The Israeli elections of February 10, 2009, brought into office a right-of-center Israeli government under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu—the same Netanyahu who had clashed with President Bill Clinton. It was not long before Netanyahu and Obama also clashed, due in part to their different worldviews and in part to their different priorities in the Middle East.

Obama's Approach to World Affairs

In all US presidential transitions, especially when the outgoing president has been in office for two terms, the new incumbent seeks to demonstrate that his policies are different from his predecessor's. This was the case when George W. Bush replaced Bill Clinton, and it was also the case when Barack Obama replaced Bush. When Obama took office, he made a major effort to show that he would replace the unilateralism of the Bush era with a policy of outreach to countries that had come into sharp conflict with the United States during the Bush administration. These included Iran, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, Russia, China, North Korea, and Myanmar. The Obama administration assumed that if you meet your opponents halfway, they will reciprocate. While this appeared to be a dangerously naive assumption to many critics, including those in Israel, the administration held fast to this policy during its first year.

A second aspect of the new administration's approach involved outreach to the Muslim world. In speeches in both Turkey and Egypt in 2009, Obama sought to portray the United States as a friend of the Muslim world, despite the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. To emphasize this point, Obama played down the Islamic nature of the terrorism, much to the displeasure of conservatives in the United States, who condemned him for giving a free ride to Islamic terrorism.[48]

A third aspect of the new policy was a cooling of ties with Israel, after the warm, if not cozy, relationship of the Bush years. Obama appeared to feel that such a cooling would help the United States appear more evenhanded and consequently facilitate US efforts to solve the conflict. Thus, early in his administration, Obama called for a halt in settlement construction, including in Jerusalem, despite the understanding reached by Bush and Sharon in April 2004. In addition, despite trips to Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, Obama did not visit Israel, despite being urged to do so by a number of American Jewish organizations, including those affiliated with the liberal J Street movement, as it appeared that Obama was deliberately distancing himself from the Jewish state. Reinforcing the chill in relations was the fact that while Obama was a left-of-center liberal, Netanyahu was a right-of-center conservative. Gone were the days when the conservatives Bush and Sharon could easily relate because they saw the world through the same lens. Indeed, in the very first public meeting between Obama and Netanyahu in May 2009, the tension between the two leaders was clearly visible.

In addition to their different political perspectives, Obama and Netanyahu differed on Middle East priorities. To Netanyahu, Iran was the primary issue. With Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad calling for Israel to be wiped off the face of the earth and rapidly developing Iran's nuclear capability, Netanyahu pressed Obama to take action against Iran. For Obama, however, the priority was to try to get the Iranians to change their policies by dialogue, not force, and during his first year in office, Obama made numerous appeals to the Iranian regime for improved relations, only to be continually rebuffed. Obama also saw a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict as the priority in the Middle East: it was a means of weakening Iran's proxies, Hizbollah and Hamas; pulling Syria away from Iran; and rallying the Sunni Arab world against Iran if it failed to respond to his outreach policy.[49] Here again, the settlement issue was key as Obama felt that by getting Israel to stop settlement building in Jerusalem and the West Bank, the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations would be facilitated and an overall settlement of the conflict brought closer.[50] Unfortunately for Obama, as he would later ruefully admit, he did not understand the changes in Israeli politics caused by the Israeli-Hizbollah war of 2006 and the Israeli-Hamas war of December 2008–January 2009.

Israel's Move to the Right

The Israeli elections of 2009 reflected a clear move to the right by the Israeli body politic. Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party jumped from twelve to twenty-seven seats, and the right-of-center Yisrael Beiteinu Party of Avigdor Lieberman rose from eleven to fifteen seats. At the same time, the left-wing Meretz Party dropped from five to three seats and the left-of-center Labor Party fell from nineteen to thirteen seats. In explaining the shift to the right, analysts noted that the policy of unilateral withdrawals had not achieved peace. After Ehud Barak unilaterally withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, Israel had to endure repeated rocket attacks leading up to a major war with Hizbollah in 2006, which the centrist Kadima Party did not wage effectively. Similarly, after Israel withdrew both settlements and military bases from Gaza in 2005, Israelis experienced increased rocket fire from Gaza, which Hamas had seized in 2007, leading to the major Israeli invasion of Gaza in December 2008. Given these events, the majority of Israelis were wary of further withdrawals, which, as Netanyahu pointed out in the campaign, would bring Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion airport into rocket range.

In addition, Israelis were largely suspicious of the Palestinians; the split between Hamas and Fatah made any final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement a distant possibility, at best. Making matters worse was a general feeling that the Palestinian Authority leader, Mahmoud Abbas, was well meaning but weak, and that his prime minister, Salam Fayyad, was honest but had no political base. In addition, the stance of Israel's Arab community (20 percent of the Israeli population) had become problematic to Israel's Jewish majority, as the leaders of the Arab community increasingly sided with Israel's Arab enemies while demanding that Israel as a Jewish state be replaced with Israel "as a state of its peoples."[51] Given this turn to the right, Obama's pressure on Israel was received coldly, and Obama's popularity, as measured in Israeli polls, fell to single digits.[52]

Consequently Netanyahu took a hard line on the Middle East peace process, refusing to agree to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and promoting an active Jewish settlement program in the West Bank. Under heavy US pressure, however, he modified his position. Thus in June 2009, in a speech at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, Netanyahu agreed to a two-state solution, with the important qualification that Jerusalem would remain united under Israeli control. Then in November 2009 Netanyahu also agreed to a ten-month partial settlement construction ban, excluding Jerusalem.

By the beginning of 2010, the split between Obama and Israel seemed to be narrowing. Obama had begun to take a tougher stand on Iran after the Iranian government, now beset by increasing domestic dissent, continued to rebuff Obama's call for improved ties and rejected international efforts to deal with Iran's nuclear enrichment efforts. As far as Israel was concerned, Obama publicly stated in a *Time* magazine interview on February 1, 2010, that he had "overestimated" the US ability to get the Israelis and Palestinians to engage in a "meaningful conversation" because of the domestic political problems both sides faced.[53] Consequently the United States backed off from its calls for a full settlement freeze and accepted the partial freeze proposed by Netanyahu. Despite this apparently improving situation in US-Israeli relations, a crisis erupted in mid-March 2010, when US vice president Joe Biden was in Israel.

There were several aspects of the crisis. First, after a great deal of effort, the United States had coaxed Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas to agree to resume peace talks with Israel, albeit at the low level of indirect or proximity talks under which the US Middle East special envoy, George Mitchell, would shuttle between the two sides. Biden's trip to Israel was aimed, in part, to add the US imprimatur to the start of the talks that had been endorsed by the Arab League, thus giving Abbas a modicum of legitimization. However, as the date of Biden's visit to Israel approached, the situation in East Jerusalem became more explosive. The Israeli government, either with Netanyahu's active support or with his toleration, had begun to accelerate the construction of Jewish housing in Arab-populated neighborhoods of East Jerusalem such as Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah, while at the same time destroying Arab-owned housing in these neighborhoods and elsewhere in East Jerusalem because they had been built without the municipal permit, which, under an Israeli catch-22 policy, is almost impossible for East Jerusalem Arabs to obtain. This had inflamed Arab opinion. The announcement, in the midst of Biden's visit, that Israel was going to construct an additional 1,600 homes in East Jerusalem, even though the construction was to take place in the all-Jewish neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo, was the straw that broke the camel's back as far as the Palestinians were concerned, and they refused to enter into the indirect negotiations to which they had committed. This, in turn, undermined not only the Biden mission but also the months-long diplomacy the Obama administration had been actively pursuing to get the Israeli-Palestinian talks under way.

Following the fiasco of the Biden visit, where heated words were exchanged between Netanyahu and high-ranking members of the Obama administration, the administration appeared split on what to do.[54] One group argued that it was time for the United States to come up with its own plan for an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement, and in well-placed leaks in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* in early April, the Obama administration was portrayed as actively considering coming up with its own peace plan.[55] However, others in the administration argued that the United States could not want a solution more than the parties themselves did. In a news conference at the end of April, President Obama appeared to come down midway between the two positions, thereby enabling the United States to keep both options open.[56]

Meanwhile, as discord between the Obama administration and Netanyahu continued, nearly three hundred members of the United States Congress who were sympathetic to Israel had made their position clear in a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in late March, in which they expressed "deep concern" over the US-Israeli crisis.[57] Perhaps heeding the call of Congress, or perhaps realizing that the United States could not move the peace process forward without a good working relationship with Israel, the Obama administration resumed its efforts to convene the indirect talks between Israel and the Palestinians and improved its relations with Israel. The United States made a major gesture to Israel by granting it an additional $205 million in military aid over and above the $3 billion Israel was already getting, to help it expand its Iron Dome antimissile system, which would help protect Israel against rocket attacks from Gaza and Lebanon.[58] Netanyahu appears to have reciprocated by putting a de facto freeze on construction in East Jerusalem. At the same time, however, Obama's effort to eliminate nuclear weapons from the world, an effort that appeared partially aimed at putting additional pressure on Iran to scrap its nuclear enrichment program, came into conflict with Israel's need for nuclear weapons as a deterrent against a possible attack by its enemies. Consequently Israel was unhappy with the US decision in late May 2010 at a review session for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to support a call for Israel to join the treaty, a development that would force it to disclose and then give up its nuclear weapons.[59]

Despite this disagreement, US-Israeli relations appeared to be on the upswing by July. The United States had refused to join the Arab and Turkish condemnation of Israel over the incident of May 31 in which Israel intercepted a Gaza-bound flotilla and killed nine Turkish Islamists who were resisting the Israeli capture of one of the ships in the flotilla (the others surrendered peacefully). In July, Netanyahu again visited Washington, and this time his reception was much more cordial than during his previous visit in March. Obama, after meeting with Netanyahu, stated, "The US will never ask Israel to do anything that undermines its security," and he emphasized that the bond between Israel and the United States was "unbreakable."[60]

By early September US diplomacy had scored a minor breakthrough when Abbas, with the backing of the Arab League, had finally agreed to enter into direct negotiations with Israel. The timing was, however, problematic. The end of Israel's partial settlement freeze was set for September 26, just three weeks after the formal start of the direct negotiations. Despite a great deal of pomp in Washington, little was actually accomplished in the three weeks of direct talks, and when the partial settlement construction freeze ended, Israel resumed construction in the settlements and East Jerusalem, actions that Obama called "unhelpful." Abbas broke off negotiations.[61]

At this point the United States floated an offer to Netanyahu to get him to extend the settlement building moratorium for an additional ninety days. The hope was that a general border delineation could be worked out by that time so that future Israeli settlement construction would take place only in areas that Abbas and Netanyahu agreed would remain part of Israel under a land swap arrangement. Reportedly, the offer included providing Israel with an additional twenty F-35 Stealth fighter planes (Israeli had already planned to buy twenty), a US-Israeli security treaty, and US pledges to protect Israel against efforts by the Palestinian Authority to get the UN Security Council to vote for the establishment of a Palestinian state, even without an agreement with Israel.[62] Despite this generous offer, Netanyahu refused to accept the US initiative, which was subsequently taken off the bargaining table.

By December 2010, it appeared that the Obama administration had changed its policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a speech to the Brookings Institution on December 9, 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton downplayed the settlement issue in favor of dealing with all the core issues of the conflict—Jerusalem, refugees, water, borders, and security, as well as settlements.[63] This strategy did not prove successful either as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict remained frozen. Nonetheless, in February 2011, the US continued to protect Israeli interests at the United Nations as it vetoed a Security Council resolution condemning the Israeli settlements (a policy the Obama administration would change in December 2016).[64] Then, reacting to the Arab Spring, which had burst onto the Middle Eastern political scene in December 2010, President Obama gave a major speech in May 2011, a part of which also dealt with the Israel-Palestinian conflict. In it, he again changed US policy, now calling for the two parties to concentrate first on borders and security before turning to the "emotional issues" of the refugees and Jerusalem. His call for the borders to be based on the 1967 lines, however, resulted in an angry outburst from Netanyahu, despite the fact that Obama also stressed the need for Israel's justified security concerns to be taken into account in any agreement.[65]

Following his May 2011 speech, Obama went into reelection mode, and for the next year and a half, his speeches, including those at the United Nations, were highly supportive of Israeli positions, especially Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and its right to defend itself. Meanwhile, Netanyahu warmly embraced Obama's opponent, Mitt Romney—a development that accelerated the shift of support in the United States for Israel from bipartisan to much more Republican-based.[66]

OBAMA'S SECOND TERM AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

At the beginning of his second term in office, in March 2013, perhaps realizing that his policy of distancing himself from Israel had not facilitated an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, or perhaps hoping to lay the groundwork for the efforts of his new secretary of state, John Kerry, to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian agreement during a planned nine-month peace effort, Obama decided to finally visit Israel. While there Obama gave a speech that, while calling for a Palestinian state, also asserted that the Jews had a right to live as a free people, in peace and security, in their own state. Uttering the Hebrew words "*Atem lo levad*" (You are not alone), Obama also affirmed that the United States would always be there to back Israel.[67] Given all the military aid that the United States had provided to Israel and its additional help for Israel's Iron Dome antimissile system, which went beyond George W. Bush's ten-year military assistance agreement with Israel, Obama's words resonated in Israel.

Unfortunately, despite Obama's visit, relations between Israel and the United States soon foundered. In part, this was due to Obama's perceived failure to live up to his "redline" proclamation in 2012 in which he promised to take action if the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Asad, now engaged in a bitter war with his domestic opponents, used chemical weapons in the conflict. Netanyahu, and most Israelis, now feared that Obama would not live up to his other "redline": preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.[68] These fears seemed to be realized when Obama moved ahead in 2013 to reach a nuclear agreement with Iran, a country that Israel saw as an existential threat given the Iranian leadership's frequent calls to destroy Israel. Thus, when a preliminary agreement with Iran was reached in November 2013, Netanyahu called it a "historic mistake," while the Obama administration warmly praised it.[69]

Meanwhile, personal relationships between the Obama administration and the Israeli coalition government grew increasingly testy as Israeli defense minister Moshe

Ya'alon called Kerry "obsessive and messianic" in his efforts to secure an Israeli-Palestinian agreement and openly criticized the Obama administration as "weak" for failing to counter the Russian seizure of Crimea and its intervention in eastern Ukraine in February 2014.[70] Further damaging US-Israeli relations in March 2014 was Israel's failure to join the US in a UN General Assembly condemnation of Russia for its actions in Crimea and Ukraine.[71] Making matters worse was the collapse of the Kerry peace effort in April 2014 and Israel's continued construction of housing in West Bank settlements and in East Jerusalem.[72]

The Gaza War of 2014 and Its Aftermath

After a Hamas official in Turkey took credit for the murder of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank, Netanyahu responded by arresting a number of Hamas operatives there, some of whom had been released in the 2011 Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange. Tension between Hamas-controlled Gaza and Israel rose, and in July 2014 full-scale war broke out, which would also damage US-Israeli ties.

There was a series of disagreements between the United States and Israel during the war. The Obama administration, while supporting Israel's right to defend itself from Hamas rocket attacks, was critical of Israeli military actions that took the lives of Palestinian civilians. Israel, in turn, claimed that not only had it done its best to minimize civilian casualties (confirmed by Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, after the war), but Hamas had often fired rockets from civilian areas. Second, the US Federal Aviation Authority's decision to temporarily ban US flights to Israel's Ben Gurion airport was seen by Israel not only as a gift to Hamas terrorism but also as an effort to pressure Israel into agreeing to a cease-fire. Indeed, during the war, there was a serious disagreement over US efforts to bring about a cease-fire, with Israel taking a dim view of Kerry's involvement of Turkey and Qatar (allies of Hamas but, in 2014, enemies of Israel) in the cease-fire effort. Finally, a dispute arose over US supplies of weapons to Israel, especially Hellfire missiles.[73]

In the aftermath of the war, with Israeli elections a year away, Netanyahu, most likely seeking to bolster his position on the right side of the Israeli political spectrum, which had been damaged due to the inconclusive result of the war, embarked on another round of annexing land on the West Bank and authorizing the construction of additional housing in East Jerusalem and in West Bank settlements. This was met by heavy criticism from the United States, and the US-Israeli conflict peaked when it was revealed that the Israeli government had approved 2,600 additional housing units in East Jerusalem just before Netanyahu's meeting with Obama at the White House at the end of September 2014. The Obama administration severely criticized the housing plan; Netanyahu denounced the criticism as "against American values"; and the Obama administration responded that it was American values that had funded the Iron Dome antimissile system, which had protected Israeli lives during the 2014 Israel-Hamas war.[74]

By the end of October 2014, it appeared as if US-Israeli relations had gone from bad to worse, as the outspoken Israeli defense minister, Moshe Ya'alon, was denied meetings with Secretary of State John Kerry and Vice President Joe Biden on a visit to the US. An even more telling blow to the relationship came soon thereafter when "senior Obama administration officials" were quoted in an *Atlantic* article as calling Netanyahu a "chickenshit" and a "coward."[75]

Even as it appeared that relations between Netanyahu's government and the Obama administration could get no worse, they hit a new low in March 2015 when Netanyahu, without consulting the Obama administration, accepted an invitation from Republican John Boehner, then Speaker of the House, to address a joint session of the US House of Representatives and Senate (both controlled by Republicans) on the threat from Iran and the dangers of the emerging deal between Iran and the US and the other permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany (the P5+1). Since Boehner and a large number of other Republicans were highly critical of the agreement the Obama administration was negotiating with Iran, as was Netanyahu, the invitation was a clear effort to achieve partisan advantage over the Obama administration. Notably, a number of prominent Democrats boycotted the speech. While Netanyahu was able to exploit his speech to Congress to strengthen his domestic position in the run-up to the March 2015 Israeli election, it was also a further indication that the once-bipartisan support for Israel in the US was eroding.

The US-Israel Arms Assistance Agreement and the Final Confrontation over Settlements

As could be expected, relations between the Obama administration and Israel worsened further as a result of the formation of a right-wing, pro-settlement coalition government following the March 2015 Israeli elections, in which Naftali Bennett, leader of the pro-settlement Jewish Home Party, played a prominent role. Indeed, settlement expansion was to bedevil US-Israeli relations until the end of the Obama presidency. However, one bright spot in US-Israeli relations was the signing of a new ten-year, $38 billion military assistance agreement in September 2016. Although it gave Israel more funds per year than the agreement reached with the George W. Bush administration ($3.8 billion versus $3.0 billion), it also phased out Israel's use of a portion of the funds for its domestic arms industry, and it prohibited Israel from asking for more than $3.8 billion in any year. Netanyahu's domestic critics seized on these limitations, asserting that had Netanyahu not alienated the Obama administration over the Iran nuclear deal and the settlements question, Israel could have gotten a better agreement.[76]

Donald Trump's election in November 2016 further strengthened the right-wing impulse of Netanyahu's government, particularly after President-Elect Trump nominated David N. Friedman, a supporter of the settlements, to be ambassador to Israel. Led by Naftali Bennett, Israel's pro-settlement forces pushed to rapidly expand housing construction in the settlements and to legalize hitherto illegal settlement outposts, including those built on privately owned Palestinian land (the owners were promised compensation). This development was evidently too much for the Obama administration. On December 23, 2016, the US abstained on UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which strongly condemned Israeli settlement activity both in

Jerusalem and in the West Bank and demanded that Israel stop constructing housing there. While the resolution also condemned terrorism and incitement, the perpetrators of the terrorism and incitement—the Palestinians—were not mentioned by name in the resolution, adding to Israel's unhappiness with it.[77]

Reacting to Israeli criticism of the United States' failure to veto the resolution, Secretary of State Kerry, long frustrated by Israeli settlement expansion, stated the following in a speech on December 28, 2016:

> I advised the [Israeli] prime minister repeatedly that further settlement activities only invited UN action. Yet the settlement activity only increased—including advancing the unprecedented legislation to legalize settler outposts that the [Israeli] prime minister himself reportedly warned could expose Israel to action at the Security Council, and even international prosecution, before deciding to support it. In the end, we could not in good conscience protect the most extreme elements of the settler movement as it tries to destroy the two-state solution. [Also,] we could not in good conscience turn a blind eye to Palestinian actions that foment hatred and violence. It is not in the US interest to help anyone on either side create a unitary state. We may not be able to stop them, but we cannot be expected to defend them, and it is certainly not the role of any country to vote against its own policies. That is why we decided not to block the UN resolution that makes clear both sides [have to] take steps to save the two-state solution while there is still time.[78]

Secretary Kerry's comments, which were made three weeks before the end of the Obama administration, provide a useful point of departure for comparing the policies of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations toward the Arab-Israeli conflict.

CONCLUSION:
COMPARING THE BUSH AND OBAMA POLICIES

In comparing the Bush and Obama policies toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict, we find both similarities and differences. Both administrations committed themselves to Israel's security. In a 2007 memorandum of understanding with Israel, the Bush administration committed the United States to supply Israel with $30 billion in security assistance over the next decade. The Obama administration not only agreed to continue funding security assistance to Israel at that level but also added $205 million to support Israel's Iron Dome antimissile system, and in September 2016 signed a new ten-year, $38 billion security assistance agreement with Israel. However, neither the Bush administration nor the Obama administration supported Israel's calls for an American attack on Iran's nuclear installations, and both were hesitant to support an Israeli attack on Iran as well. Indeed, the Obama administration's nuclear agreement with Iran in July 2015 was a major source of conflict between the United States and Israel.

Another similarity between the Bush and Obama administrations is that they both called for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. Both Bush and Obama also strongly endorsed the concept of Israel as a Jewish state.

Despite these similarities, there have been a number of differences, and in the mind of the Israeli public at least, they tended to outweigh the similarities. First and foremost have been the differences over Israeli settlement building. While no US administration has formally supported the building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, George W. Bush in April 2004 tacitly supported Israel's continued building in the major settlement blocs when he stated, "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of the final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." By contrast, early on in his administration Obama came out strongly against settlements, not only in the West Bank outside the settlement blocs but also in the settlement blocs and in Jerusalem as well. While Netanyahu agreed to a partial settlement freeze that didn't include East Jerusalem, the settlement issue was a major and continuous cause of conflict between Israel and the Obama administration.

A second difference can be seen in the differing worldviews of the two administrations. Bush was a conservative with a black-and-white understanding of terrorism, one that was reinforced by 9/11. In this, both Prime Minister Sharon, a conservative, and Prime Minister Olmert, a moderate conservative, were on the same wavelength as Bush, and this reinforced their relationships. By contrast, Obama was a liberal, and his view of the world clashed with that of Netanyahu, a conservative.

A third difference can be seen in the administrations' different approaches to Iran. In his first term Bush sought to isolate Iran. In his second term he proved willing to cooperate with key European Union states in their efforts to get Iran to stop enriching uranium, but relations between the United States and Iran remained hostile during Bush's entire term of office. By contrast, Obama's outreach policy toward Iran was seen as the height of naïveté by Netanyahu, who delivered a speech in March 2015 to a joint session of the US Congress in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the US from signing a nuclear agreement with Iran.

A related outreach program by the Obama administration involved Syria—which the Bush administration sought to isolate, especially after the assassination of Lebanese Sunni leader Rafiq Hariri in 2005. Obama apparently hoped that by warming up relations with Syria, he could influence the Syrians to stop the infiltration of anti-US fighters into Iraq, as well as break Syria's ties with Iran and stop it from aiding Hamas and Hizbollah. That policy also proved unsuccessful, and US inaction during the subsequent Syrian civil war raised questions in Israel (and elsewhere in the Middle East) about US credibility.

Yet another difference between Bush and Obama lay in Obama's pursuit of a nuclear-free world. Bush never embraced the concept, and Obama appeared to the Israelis to be sacrificing their interests by failing to insist that Israel should not be pressured to give up its nuclear weapons until after a comprehensive Middle East peace agreement had been achieved.

Another major difference between the two administrations was their approaches to the Arab-Israeli peace process. Bush, after 9/11, sought to end the al-Aqsa *intifada* and create a Palestinian state that would live in peace alongside Israel. While the Obama administration had the same goal, Bush's post-9/11 efforts, unlike Obama's, tended to be episodic, and they all but ceased after both the Zinni mission to the Middle East and the 2003 Road Map were sabotaged by Palestinian terrorism. After Arafat died and Mahmoud Abbas was elected president of the Palestinian Authority, the United States moved ahead with its peace plan, since Abbas, unlike Arafat, was a strong opponent of terrorism. Unfortunately for Bush, however, Abbas proved to be a weak leader, and the US democratization program, which had become a centerpiece of the administration's policy in the Middle East, foundered when Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006. Bush's strategy suffered another blow when Prime Minister Sharon suffered a massive stroke in January 2006, soon after his unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. The Palestinian government collapsed when Hamas seized power in Gaza in June 2007, signaling a major split in the Palestinian movement. By that time, with the war in Iraq going badly, and with the Democrats having won control of both houses of the US Congress in the midterm election of 2006, Bush was very much a lame duck president. His subsequent efforts at peacemaking at the Annapolis conference in November 2007 did not prove successful, although if one is to believe Bush's memoirs the two sides did come close. However, the fact that the Bush administration came to an end as war was raging between Israel and Hamas illustrates the failure of the Bush administration's peacemaking strategy.

Obama, by contrast, had a very different approach. Unlike Bush's episodic approach to Middle East peacemaking, Obama's was continuous, although he seemed to constantly revise his strategy. Obama's strong emphasis on trying to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement was due in part to a desire to show he was different from Bush. Thus, while Bush was inactive in pursuing the Arab-Israeli peace process at the start of his presidency, Obama on his second day in office appointed George Mitchell as his Middle East mediator. Obama also undertook a major outreach effort to the Muslim and Arab worlds with speeches in Turkey and Egypt in an effort to show that despite the fact that the United States was involved in wars in two Muslim countries, Iraq and Afghanistan, it was not at war with Islam. To emphasize this point Obama downplayed the Islamic nature of terrorism—much to the displeasure of US conservatives. At the same time, he appeared to deliberately cool ties with Israel.

Obama's peacemaking strategy had multiple phases until the end of 2016. Through most of 2009, he sought to get Israel to agree to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and stop building in the settlements; the PA under Abbas to return to direct negotiations with Israel; Syria to cut its ties to Hamas, Hizbollah, and Iran; and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates to make confidence-building gestures to Israel, such as allowing Israeli civilian overflights of their countries and visits by Israeli businessmen. When this ambitious plan did not prove successful, the administration decided on a more modest policy in 2010 and sought to get indirect or proximity talks under way between Israel and the Palestinians. The indirect talks did not bear fruit, however, other than to finally get Abbas's agreement to enter into direct talks with Israel, something that took place in early September 2010.

Secretary of State Clinton appeared to shift US policy yet again in December 2010 when, in a speech, she changed Obama's emphasis on stopping Israeli construction in the settlements by asserting the need to deal with all the final status issues between Israel and the Palestinians (water, security, Jerusalem, borders, refugees, and settlements). Then in May 2011, in a speech primarily designed to respond to the emergence of the Arab uprisings, Obama changed the emphasis once again, placing priority on borders and security.

In March 2013, following his reelection, Obama embarked on yet another tactic to try to bring about an Israeli-Palestinian agreement: demonstrably drawing closer to Israel by visiting it and offering strong support. After a right-wing government in Israel accelerated in 2015 and 2016 settlement expansion, which the Obama presidency saw as destroying the chances for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, it decided in December 2016 not to veto UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which severely condemned Israeli settlement expansion. That was the Obama administration's last major move on Middle East peacemaking.

In sum, while there were a number of similarities, as well as differences, between the policies of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, there was one common thread running through both administrations: the inability to achieve a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement.

Notes

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34. Cited in Nicholas Kralev, "White House Urged West Bank Action," *Washington Times*, August 13, 2004.

35. All quotations from Bush's speech are taken from *Ha'aretz*, April 15, 2004.

36. The agreement was published on the Associated Press website, March 17, 2005.

37. Mahmoud Abbas, interview by author, Ramallah, June 26, 2005.

38. In a *Financial Times* interview on April 20, 2007, Rice clung to the democratization policy, stating, "I'll choose elections and democracy, even if it brings to power people that we don't like. . . . Without reform and democratization you're going to have a false stability in the Middle East which will continue to give rise to extremism." Interview, "What the Secretary Has Been Saying," on the US State Department website.

39. Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar said Hamas would not renounce the right to armed resistance against Israel to keep the money flowing from Europe and the United States: "I'm sure Israel will disappear as the Crusaders and other empires disappeared. All of Palestine will become part of the Arab and Islamic land—as the Koran promised." Cited in Paul Martin, "Leader Likely to Cut Ties with Israel," *Washington Times*, January 27, 2006.

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43. See Elli Lieberman, "Israel's 2006 War with Hizbollah: The Failure of Deterrence," in Robert O. Freedman, ed., *Contemporary Israel* (Boulder: Westview, 2009), 317–358.

44. For an analysis of the US efforts to bolster Israeli security, see the report by Andrew J. Shapiro, assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, delivered to the Brookings Institution, July 16, 2010.

45. The leading US opponent to an American attack on Iran was Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who was appointed to his post by George W. Bush in 2006 and retained by Barack Obama. For Bush's view of a possible US attack on Iran, see Bush, *Decision Points,* 417–420.

46. Bush, *Decision Points,* 408–409.

47. Ibid., 410.

48. A leading critic of the Obama administration's policy on Islam was the conservative *Washington Times*, whose editorials and op-eds regularly condemned Obama for being weak on Islam.

49. According to the Wikileaks revelations, by 2006 most of the Sunni Arab leaders were already vehemently anti-Iranian and some, like Saudi Arabia, were urging a US attack on Iran's nuclear installations, a development that by 2009 Obama was undoubtedly aware of. Nonetheless, Obama seems to have thought that an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement would make it easier for these Arab leaders to rally their people against Iran. See David E. Sanger, "Around the World, Distress over Iran," *New York Times*, November 28, 2010.

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PART IV

The Persian Gulf in US Policy

The term *grand strategy* in international relations refers to the articulation of a country's core interests, an understanding of the principal threats to these interests, and views about which policies are best designed to advance these objectives while thwarting threats. US interests in the Middle East have remained largely constant since World War II. Most importantly, US leaders have wanted to ensure easy access to and the safe transport of oil, and to prevent the expansion of groups hostile to America and its allies.

Although these interests have remained constant, the primary threats to these interests have changed through the decades, from the Soviet Union during the Cold War and Iran after the 1979 Revolution to Iraq in the 1990s after its invasion of Kuwait and radical Islamist groups after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. As America's primary enemies have changed, so, too, have US policies that were designed to counter these threats. These policies have tended to become considerably more forceful as the principal dangers became less powerful; the greater America's relative power advantage, the greater the freedom of action for US leaders. These policies included: balance-of-power politics and the support of local allies during the Cold War to counter the Soviets; a US-led campaign in 1991 to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait (though not to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime); and preventive war—coupled with forceful regime change and nation building—against Iraq in 2003. A principal objective of the chapters in this section is to discuss the evolution of US grand strategy in the Middle East since the end of the Second World War. As several of the chapters make clear, more extensive foreign policies have not always resulted in greater security. The opposite, in fact, has often been the case.

Balance-of-power politics based in realpolitik, most notably the frequent support of authoritarian regimes that were sympathetic to the United States, were the dominant tactic implemented during the Cold War to counter the Soviet threat. Early in this conflict, the United States initiated a relationship with Iran through the 1953 Mussadiq coup and then enhanced this relationship by supporting the shah of Iran as the US "policeman" in the Gulf as part of the Vietnam-induced 1969 Nixon Doctrine, which sought to secure US surrogates for its global strategic interests. (The United States envisioned Israel playing a similar role in the heartland of the Middle East.) With the fall of the shah in the 1979 Iranian revolution and with the ensuing Iran-Iraq war, Washington began to see Iraq's Saddam Hussein as its new gendarme in the region, keeping Khomeinism at bay, restoring Gulf stability, and possibly playing the role that Egyptian president Anwar Sadat never filled: leading a moderate Arab consensus toward peace with Israel. US support of Hussein backfired, however—a turn of events that became readily apparent when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, eliciting the decision by George H. W. Bush's administration to intervene militarily. The 1991 Gulf War, along with the end of the Cold War, contributed to a new regional configuration full of prospects for peace and stability as well as conflict and instability. Importantly, this resulted in an enhanced role for the United States in a part of the Middle East that had traditionally been wary of US influence.

In Chapter 13, Gary Sick, who served on the National Security Council during the Carter administration, examines the evolution of US balancing policies in the Persian Gulf from World War II to the period of "dual containment" of Iran and Iraq in the 1990s. He focuses in particular on the enhanced role of the United States in the region following the 1979 Iranian revolution. In addition to providing context for this section in the book, Sick also critically analyzes the changing role of the United States in the area, detailing how the American military, political, and economic footprint in the region has steadily increased over time even after the threat from the Soviet Union—which was by far the greatest threat to US core interests—was no more.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks initiated a new, more aggressive era for US Middle Eastern policies. Under the leadership of President George W. Bush, the United States reacted to these events in a dramatic manner. The distance traveled from the secure, if not invincible, feeling Americans enjoyed prior to 9/11 to the sense of vulnerability in the aftermath of the attacks was enormous. This feeling of vulnerability in large part produced a consensus in the United States in support of President Bush's highly assertive foreign policies. These new policies became manifest in the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, which successfully evicted the ruling Taliban regime by the end of the year. They became even more apparent in the September 2002 enunciation of the administration's national security strategy, known as the Bush Doctrine, which, among other things, advocated preventive war in order to deal with rising threats before they could injure the United States. In March 2003, the Bush Doctrine became the rationale for the US-led invasion of Iraq, which toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein. The Iraq war also became a centerpiece of the Bush administration's strategy of spreading democracy—including by force—as a key means of reducing security threats to the United States. Amid the global war on terror spearheaded by the Bush administration after 9/11, the United States became caught in a quagmire in Iraq generated by a lethal insurgency composed of Iraqi elements and a small number of foreign jihadists.

Steve Yetiv and Ali Abootalebi contribute two chapters (Chapters 14 and 15, respectively) examining the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its aftermath. Yetiv first outlines the Bush administration's rationale in making the decision to go to war in Iraq. In doing so, he analyzes the popular perceptions—and misperceptions—of why the Bush administration went against the wishes of most of the international community and invaded Iraq. In the process of his examination, he outlines what appear to be the real reasons: Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs, putative ties to terrorist networks, and massive human rights violations. Beyond these self-declared motives for war, key—though misguided or erroneous—contextual variables helped push the administration to war, including belief in the need for preventive military action over containment policies, faulty intelligence, and overconfidence in the relative ease of success of war.

Abootalebi builds on these themes in a stinging critique of the Bush administration's decision to go to war and the series of missteps it made during and after the initial military phase of the conflict. Among the most important of these were: a misguided belief that a stable democratic system could be exported to Iraq by force; a misunderstanding of Iraqi culture, especially the importance of religious divisions; an underestimation of the profound influence that Iran was likely to have in postwar Iraq; and the deployment of far too few troops to achieve US objectives against considerable obstacles.

The core elements of America's grand strategy in the Middle East coalesced in America's alliance with Saudi Arabia, which has existed since the end of the World War II, as Thomas Lippman details in Chapter 16. Protecting the kingdom's vast oil wealth from enemies has been a key US goal since World War II, and extensive cooperation with the al Saud was critical to US efforts to contain the Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq, and extremist Islamist groups. Despite the longevity of the alliance, however, it has frequently been a troubled one in which the effects of profound ideological differences have often strained relations, though never to the breaking point. America's alliance with Saudi Arabia is thus symptomatic of US relations with the Middle East as a whole: these relations have been simultaneously sources of order and disorder, inducing both tensions and cooperation.

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CHAPTER 13

THE UNITED STATES IN THE PERSIAN GULF

From Twin Pillars to Dual Containment

Gary Sick

The United States arrived reluctantly as an active player in the Persian Gulf, but after a quarter century of resistance, turmoil, and false starts, it emerged as the unquestioned military and political power in the region. In some respects this is merely the story of how the United States slowly reconciled itself to assuming the role originated by the British in the nineteenth century. British interests, however, were never identical to US interests, and the underpinnings of US policy by the turn of the century bore little resemblance to the classic British defense of its eastern lines of communication.

The interests of the United States in the Persian Gulf region have been very simple and consistent: first, to ensure access by the industrialized world to the vast oil resources of the region; and second, to prevent any hostile power from acquiring political or military control over those resources. Throughout the Cold War, the most immediate threat was the Soviet Union; after the Soviet collapse, Iran and Iraq became the primary targets of US containment efforts.

Other objectives, such as preserving the stability and independence of the Gulf states or containing the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, were derivative concerns and were implicit in the two grand themes of oil and containment. Preoccupation with the security of Israel was a driving factor in US Middle East policy for half a century, and developments in the Arab-Israeli arena sporadically influenced US policies in the Persian Gulf (and vice versa). Especially after the end of the Cold War, the Israeli factor began to assume much greater importance in the formulation of US policy in the Gulf.

The slow unfolding of US policy contributed to (and occasionally was the victim of) the development of the modern Persian Gulf. This chapter focuses on a few key turning points, when seemingly unrelated US policy choices eventually resolved themselves into a surprisingly coherent strategic posture.

THE TWIN PILLAR POLICY

Prior to World War II, US involvement in the Persian Gulf was minimal. The first sustained encounter with the region was in the nineteenth century, in the days of the great clipper ships.[1] The Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean were regarded as a British preserve, and US political, commercial, and military contact with the region was extremely rare.[2]

The US Middle East Command was established during World War II to oversee the supply route of war materiel to the Soviet Union. Its forty thousand US troops constituted the largest US deployment to the region from that time until Operation Desert Storm in 1991. The small US naval contingent (Middle East Force) that was established in 1947 relied on British hospitality at Jufair on Bahrain Island.

The British announcement in 1968 that it intended to withdraw from its historic position east of Suez came as an unwelcome shock in Washington, which had long relied on the British presence as an essential component of its Soviet containment strategy along the immense arc from the Suez Canal to the Straits of Malacca. It also came at the worst possible moment, since US forces were increasingly strained by commitments in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

The Nixon administration undertook a major review of US Persian Gulf policy when it took office in 1969. This was part of a global effort to redefine US security interests at a time of competing demands on US military forces and a growing reluctance by the American public to support what were seen as potentially costly foreign commitments. The result of this effort was the Nixon Doctrine, which placed primary reliance on security cooperation with regional states as a means of protecting US interests around the world. In the Gulf, it was decided to rely heavily on the two key states of Iran and Saudi Arabia, a strategy that quickly became known as the "Twin Pillar policy."[3]

From the beginning, it was recognized that Iran would be the more substantial of the two "pillars" because of its size, its military capabilities, its physical juxtaposition between the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf, and the willingness of the shah (unlike the Arab states of the region) to cooperate openly with the United States on security matters. This very special relationship between Washington and Tehran was sealed in May 1972 during the visit to Tehran of President Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger.

In two and a half hours of conversation over two days, a deal was struck in which the United States agreed to increase the numbers of uniformed advisers in Iran and guaranteed the shah access to some of the most sophisticated nonnuclear technology in the US military arsenal. The shah, in return, agreed to accept a key role in protecting Western interests in the Persian Gulf region. All of this was summed up with startling candor at the end of the meetings, when President Nixon looked across the table to the shah and said simply, "Protect me."[4]

This moment was the culmination of several decades of tumultuous political relations between the United States and Iran. In 1953, the Eisenhower administration had carried out a "countercoup" that restored the shah to the throne and ended the political career of nationalist leader Muhammad Mussadiq.[5] By this act, the United States at once lost its political innocence with regard to Iran and guaranteed that it would be held permanently responsible—at least by Iranian popular opinion—for the Iranian ruler's excesses and cruelties. In 1963, a fiery religious leader, Ruhollah Khomeini, led the opposition to a bill that, among other things, extended diplomatic protection to American military advisers. This rebellion, which in retrospect was a rehearsal for the revolution of 1978–1979, led to Khomeini's fourteen-year exile. Although most Americans were scarcely aware of this incident, the Iranian opposition was convinced that the shah was acting on behalf of the United States.

The agreement between President Nixon and the shah in 1972 transformed the previous client relationship. Iran was on the brink of becoming a major power in the oil market and now had free access to the US arsenal of modern weaponry. This was formally acknowledged when Iran agreed to become the protector of US interests in the region, and the shah increasingly felt emboldened to lecture his great power ally on politics, economics, and strategy. The United States in turn reduced its intelligence coverage of Iran's internal politics and relied on the shah for assistance in putting down the Marxist rebellion in Dhofar, for an assured energy supply at the time of the oil embargo of 1973, and for support in political and military operations in the Middle East and Africa as well as Vietnam.

This role reversal went almost unnoticed in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere, however. In Iran, the image of a compliant shah responding to orders dictated in Washington remained vividly implanted in the national psyche. As a consequence, when the revolution exploded in the late 1970s, the United States had the worst of both worlds. It had relinquished much of its independent capacity to assess and influence Iran's internal politics, but it was popularly suspected of orchestrating every move by the shah's regime.

The Twin Pillar policy also involved a tripartite covert action with Israel to destabilize Iraq by supporting a Kurdish rebellion against Baghdad. This plan was adopted in May 1972 during the Nixon-Kissinger visit; it collapsed in 1975 when the shah unilaterally came to an agreement with Saddam Hussein and abandoned the Kurds. It established a precedent for viewing the Persian Gulf as an extension of the Arab-Israeli conflict and for US-Israeli cooperation in the region.[6]

The collapse of the shah's regime in February 1979 was the death knell for the US Twin Pillar policy. From the beginning, the policy had been predicated on a close personal relationship with the shah. With his departure and the arrival of a hostile Islamist regime in Tehran, the United States was left strategically naked in the Persian Gulf, with no safety net.

THE CARTER DOCTRINE

This blow was compounded in February 1979 by reports of an incipient invasion of North Yemen by its avowedly Marxist neighbor to the south. This event, coming in the wake of the Marxist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978, the conclusion of the Ethiopian-Soviet treaty in November 1978, the fall of the shah, and the assassination of US ambassador Adolph Dubs in Kabul in February 1979, created the impression that the United States had lost all capacity to influence regional events. That impression was strengthened when Turkey and Pakistan followed Iran in withdrawing from the Central Treaty Organization in March.

Washington responded by dispatching a carrier task force to the Arabian Sea and by rushing emergency military aid to Yemen and the Airborne Warning and Control System, or AWACS, to Saudi Arabia. The United States also undertook a systematic effort to develop a new "strategic framework" for the Persian Gulf. By the end of 1979, the outlines of a strategy had been sketched in, including initial identification of US forces for a rapid deployment force and preliminary discussions with Oman, Kenya, and Somalia about possible use of facilities. Nevertheless, when the US embassy in Tehran was attacked in November, a high-level review of US military capabilities reached the sobering conclusion that US ability to influence events in the region was extremely limited. In late November, when there were serious fears that the US hostages were in danger of being killed, a second aircraft carrier was sent to the area and two additional destroyers were assigned to the Middle East Force.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan just before Christmas in 1979 reawakened fears of a Soviet drive to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. The practical effect of the Soviet invasion was to terminate the efforts of the Carter administration to seek mutual accommodation with the Soviet Union, including support for the SALT II treaty. This policy shift was articulated by Carter in his State of the Union address of January 23, 1980: "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

This declaration, which quickly came to be known as the Carter Doctrine, bore a remarkable resemblance to the classic statement of British policy by Lord Lansdowne in 1903, when he said the United Kingdom would "regard the establishment of a naval base, or of a fortified port, in the Persian Gulf by any other power as a very grave menace to British interests," an act that would be resisted "with all the means at our disposal."[7] The statement clearly established the United States as the protecting power of the region and effectively completed the transfer of policy responsibility in the Persian Gulf from the British to the Americans.

When Carter made this statement, it reflected US intentions rather than capabilities. By the time the Reagan administration arrived in Washington in January 1981, it would have been accurate to say that the US security structure in the Persian Gulf region was more symbol than reality—at least as measured in purely military capacity.[8] Nevertheless, it was equally apparent that the developments of 1980 marked a major threshold in the evolution of US strategy and a new conviction that this region represented a major strategic zone of US vital interests, demanding both sustained attention at the highest levels of US policymaking and direct US engagement in support of specifically US interests. That was without precedent.

The Reagan administration adopted the Carter Doctrine and over the following seven years succeeded in putting more substantial military power and organization behind its words. The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) was reorganized in 1983 as a unified command known as the Central Command, based at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, with earmarked forces totaling some 230,000 military personnel from the four services. Its basic mission reflected the two themes that had wound through US regional policy from the very beginning: "to assure continued access to Persian Gulf oil and to prevent the Soviets from acquiring political-military control directly or through proxies."[9]

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR (1980–1988)

Despite the shadow of Soviet military power, all threats to oil supplies and to regional stability came not from Russia and its allies but from political developments within the region. The first of these was the Arab oil boycott at the time of the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, which nearly tripled the price of oil and sent Western economies spinning into a serious recession. The second was the Iranian revolution, and the third was the Iran-Iraq war, which Iraq launched with a massive invasion in September 1980.

The United States asserted its neutrality at the beginning of the war, then later tilted unofficially in favor of Iraq as Iran drove back the Iraqi forces and counterattacked across the border. In 1985–1986, as part of a "strategic opening" to Iran coupled with an abortive effort to free US hostages in Lebanon, the United States and Israel undertook a series of secret contacts and substantial arms transfers to Iran that effectively shifted US policy—at least at the covert level—toward Iran. When the revelation of these arrangements created consternation and threatened US relations with the friendly oil-producing states of the Gulf, the United States reversed field sharply and adopted an openly pro-Iraqi position.[10]

During much of the war, the United States and many other powers adopted a hands-off posture, content to see these two abominable regimes exhaust each other on the battlefield, particularly since the war was having relatively little impact on oil supplies or prices.[11] That nonchalance began to fade in 1985–1986 when Iran began to retaliate for Iraqi air attacks against its shipping in the Gulf by using mines and small armed boats against neutral shipping en route to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

In late 1986, Kuwait asked both the United States and the Soviet Union to place Kuwaiti tankers under their flags and provide protection. The Soviet Union agreed to reflag three Kuwaiti tankers, and the United States quickly followed suit by reflagging eleven. The United States moved a substantial number of naval ships into or near the Gulf and began escorting tanker convoys to and from Kuwait.[12] Iran's indiscriminate use of mines led other NATO navies to send minesweepers and other escort ships to the Gulf to protect international shipping.

Although the reflagging decision was seen at the time as a temporary US response to a specific problem, in retrospect it was a fundamental turning point. For the first time since World War II, the United States had assumed an operational role in the defense of the Persian Gulf, with all that implied in terms of development of infrastructure, doctrine, coordination with NATO allies, and direct collaboration with the Arab states on the southern littoral. President Reagan's military intervention thus confirmed President Carter's assertion that the Gulf was of vital interest to the United States and that the United States was prepared to use military force in pursuit of that interest. Although the Carter Doctrine addressed the prospective threat from the Soviet Union, its first major implementation involved a regional state, anticipating the massive international coalition that repelled Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in January 1991.

FROM WAR TO WAR

United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 598 was passed unanimously by the Security Council on July 20, 1987, calling for an immediate cease-fire between Iran and Iraq. This set off a full year of acrimonious debate, punctuated by sporadic missile bombardments of cities and further attacks on oil tankers.[13] A new element in this escalation of the war was the expanded use of chemical weapons by Iraq against civilian targets. Iraq had used poison gas extensively in earlier campaigns, but the targets had been Iranian military forces. On the evening of March 16, 1988, Iraq conducted two bombing raids against the village of Halabjah, which Iranian forces were about to enter. The bombs caught the local Iraqi Kurdish villagers in their homes and in the street, killing at least two thousand civilians. The UN dispatched an investigating team that confirmed the atrocity. But Iraq was unrepentant. Foreign Minister Tariq ʿAziz wrote to the UN secretary-general that "in their legitimate, moral, and internationally approved self-defense, our people are determined to use all available abilities and means against the criminal invaders."[14] In fact, in the succeeding months, Iraq used poison gas more frequently and against a wider range of targets, including civilians, than at any previous time in the war. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 612 on May 9, 1988, mandating an immediate end to the use of chemical weapons in the war and holding out the prospect of sanctions against violators, but it had no effect.

During this same period, the Soviet Union announced its intention to withdraw its military forces from Afghanistan by the end of 1988. This resulted in the signing of an accord between Afghanistan and Pakistan on April 14 in Geneva, with the United States and the Soviet Union as co-guarantors.

Throughout this period, political cohesion in Iran was breaking down, and the continued use of mines in the Gulf set off a new round of clashes with US forces.[15] Iraq went on the offensive against Iran's disorganized and disheartened military forces, recapturing the Fao Peninsula in a lightning attack on April 18, then proceeding to push back Iranian forces all along the front. In mid-May, apparently with assistance from Saudi Arabia, Iraq carried out a devastating attack on the Iranian oil transfer site at Larak Island in the southern Gulf, destroying five ships, including the world's largest supertanker.[16] Antiwar sentiment began to appear openly in demonstrations in major Iranian cities. And most disturbing of all for the divided leadership, persuasive evidence began to accumulate that Khomeini was severely ill and virtually incapacitated.

On July 3, a commercial Iranian aircraft was shot down by the USS *Vincennes,* killing all 290 passengers and crew. This terrible accident, coming at the end of a seemingly endless series of defeats, underscored the despair of Iran's position. On July 18, the Iranian foreign minister sent a letter to the UN secretary-general formally accepting Resolution 598. Two days later, Khomeini sent a "message to the nation," read by an announcer, associating himself with the decision, which, he said, was "more deadly than taking poison."[17]

Iraq was taken by surprise and initially resisted accepting a cease-fire while continuing its mopping-up operations. Iraq also continued to demonstrate a contemptuous disregard for the Security Council and for world opinion on the use of chemical weapons. A UN investigative team presented its report to the Security Council on August 1, finding that "chemical weapons continue to be used on an intensive scale" by Iraq. Only hours later, Iraq launched a massive chemical bombing attack on the Iranian town of Oshnoviyeh. However, as international pressure mounted, Saddam Hussein finally agreed to accept a cease-fire on August 6. A UN observer force was rushed to the region, and a cease-fire went into effect on August 20, 1988.

The end of the war provided an opportunity for the George H. W. Bush administration to reconsider its support for Saddam Hussein in the wake of revelations about Iraq's use of chemical weapons against its own population, the genocidal Anfal campaign against the Kurds, and Iraq's efforts to develop nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The policy of limited cooperation with Iraq, however, remained intact. This policy became an embarrassment after the defeat of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War, when claims were leveled that the US government had chosen to ignore warnings that agricultural credits might have been diverted to the purchase of military equipment. The most sensational charges of criminal responsibility were never substantiated, and the so-called Iraqgate scandal faded after the 1992 US presidential elections. However, documents made available to the Congress and the media did demonstrate persuasively that the Bush administration had pursued a largely uncritical policy toward Iraq during the period between the end of the Iran-Iraq war and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.[18]

At a minimum, this policy of tolerance and inattentiveness may have contributed to a false sense of security on the part of Saddam Hussein as he prepared to invade his neighbor to the south. The US ambassador to Baghdad, April Glaspie, was widely criticized for failing to warn Saddam Hussein about the possible consequences of an attack, but any fair-minded review of the record would reveal that she was accurately reflecting the policy of the president and secretary of state during this interwar period.[19]

THE SECOND GULF WAR

When Iraqi forces crossed the border into Kuwait at 1 a.m. on the morning of August 2, 1990, they set in motion a series of events that would transform US policy in the Persian Gulf. It marked a turning point in US relations with the Arab states of the

Gulf. The cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union on a matter of high strategy and military policy, which would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier, marked the undeniable end of the Cold War.[20] The successful creation of a very large international coalition under the auspices of the UN and under the direct leadership of the United States aroused expectations for both the UN and peacekeeping, some of which was expressed in President George H. W. Bush's use of the phrase "a new world order" in relation to the Gulf intervention.[21]

The eventual use of missiles by Iraq against Israel underscored the relationship between the Arab-Israeli conflict and Gulf policy more clearly than at any time since the oil embargo of 1973. The immediate imposition of a draconian sanctions regime against Iraq, and its continuation over a period of many years, demonstrated both the extent and limitations of collective nonviolent coercion by the international community. The combined use of air power, lightning-fast ground mobility, and high-tech weapons—many for the first time in combat—in a computerized battlefield environment wrote a new chapter in the conduct of modern warfare and raised some troubling new questions.[22] The media, especially television, brought these events into the world's living rooms with an intimacy and immediacy that may have been unprecedented in its universality.

Saddam Hussein's forces were ejected from Kuwait with minimal combat casualties.[23] On March 3, US general Norman Schwarzkopf met with an Iraqi military delegation at Safwan airfield in southern Iraq, and the Iraqis quickly agreed to allied terms. Almost immediately, revolts against Saddam Hussein's regime broke out among the Kurds in northern Iraq and among the Shi'a in southern Iraq. Initially President Bush declared that Iraq was violating the terms of the cease-fire by using military helicopters to put down the revolts. He reversed himself almost immediately, however, stating that "using helicopters like this to put down one's own people does not add to the stability of the area. . . . We are not in there trying to impose a solution inside Iraq."[24]

The distinction was critical. Over the following weeks, Iraqi forces brutally suppressed the uprisings and arguably preserved Saddam Hussein's position of power. The rationale for the change was spelled out two weeks later by US officials. One noted that "there is no interest in the coalition in further military operations." Arab officials, another said, were advising Washington: "Let Hussein deal with this, then the dust will settle and he's going to have to pay the piper for the war over Kuwait. Or at least that is what we are counting on."[25]

In an interview with David Frost, General Schwarzkopf said he was "suckered" by the Iraqis into agreeing to permit helicopters to fly, ostensibly to move top officials between cities, when they really intended to use helicopter gunships against the rebels.[26] Five years later, also in an interview with David Frost, George H. W. Bush commented on Saddam Hussein and the postwar situation: "I miscalculated. . . . I thought he'd be gone." With regard to the Safwan meeting, Bush noted, "I think he took us by surprise. . . . We might have handled the flying of helicopters differently. . . . So I think there's room for some ex post facto criticism here."[27]

Whatever the rationale, the US decision to permit Saddam Hussein to use advanced weaponry to suppress the internal revolts after the war made the United States an accessory after the fact to a massacre and ensured, whether inadvertently or not, that Saddam Hussein would retain power in Iraq. When the extent of the repression became known, and as Kurdish refugees began flooding across the border into Turkey, the United States, together with France and Great Britain, established so-called no-fly zones in the north and south. This gesture undoubtedly saved some lives and effectively prevented Saddam Hussein from reestablishing total control over the Kurdish territories. It was, however, much too late to save the many thousands of Iraqis who had spontaneously attacked the symbols of Ba'thist rule in the weeks after the allied victory.

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION AND DUAL CONTAINMENT[28]

On May 18, 1993, two months after President Clinton took office, Martin Indyk of the National Security Council staff spelled out the broad outlines of what he called America's "dual containment" policy in the Persian Gulf.[29] Traditionally, the United States had pursued a policy of balancing Iran and Iraq against each other as a means of maintaining a degree of regional stability and to protect the smaller oil-rich Arab states on the southern side of the Gulf. That was the purpose of the Twin Pillar policy, and it was implicit in subsequent tilts toward Iraq and (briefly) Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. Indyk, however, proclaimed the policy bankrupt and rejected it "because we don't need to rely on one to balance the other." Iraq was boxed in by UN sanctions, Iran was nearly prostrate after the eight-year war with Iraq, and the United States was the predominant power in the Persian Gulf with the "means to counter both the Iraqi and Iranian regimes."[30]

Iraq

The objective of the policy with regard to Iraq was to sustain the coalition that had defeated the armies of Saddam Hussein in Operation Desert Storm and to ensure that Iraq complied with all United Nations resolutions. The United States characterized the existing regime in Iraq as criminal and irredeemable and favored maintaining the sanctions until Saddam Hussein was gone.[31] This position created difficulties with other members of the UN Security Council, since Article 22 of the enabling Resolution 687 specified that the sanctions would be lifted once Iraq had eliminated and accounted for all of its weapons of mass destruction.

In the years after the adoption of the policy, the United States reportedly budgeted approximately $15 million per year for covert actions to destabilize the Saddam Hussein regime and for support of various Iraqi opposition groups.[32] The US Central Intelligence Agency attempted to organize several operations to depose Saddam Hussein, including a major covert action just before the Clinton administration took office and at least two others in 1995 and 1996.[33] These operations were unsuccessful.

There was very little debate in the United States about the desirability—even the necessity—of maintaining strict sanctions against the government of Saddam Hussein. The substantial American consensus in favor of severe sanctions could be attributed in large measure to the Iraqi leader himself. The nature of his attack on Kuwait, the looting and killing and burning that followed, his ruthless suppression of dissent, his near-genocidal tactics against his own people, the discovery that he was much closer to having nuclear and chemical weapons than had been supposed, his systematic obstruction of UN investigations, including physical interference and mass falsification of documents, and his continued military forays and threats whenever he believed he could get away with it—all of these firmly implanted an image of utter evil and constant threat. That image underscored and reinforced US insistence on what was the most elaborate network of sanctions ever imposed on a member state of the UN.

There was, however, considerable sympathy in the United States for the plight of the people of Iraq, who bore the worst of the brunt of two wars and stringent economic sanctions. This popular concern was no doubt a factor in the US decision to acquiesce in the limited sale of Iraqi oil under terms negotiated by the UN in 1996.[34] The United States insisted, however, that the misery of the Iraqi people was directly attributable to Saddam Hussein, who callously used the deprivation of his own people as a bargaining chip.[35]

In June 1993 and in September 1996, the United States launched cruise missiles against targets in Iraq. The first case was retaliation for evidence of an Iraqi plot to assassinate former president George H. W. Bush in Kuwait. The second was in retaliation for Iraqi ground force incursions in northern Iraq in cooperation with the Kurdish Democratic Party.[36] On several occasions, the United States surged military forces into the region in response to Iraqi threats or failure to comply with UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspections. In February 1998, the United States appeared to be poised for a massive strike against Iraq, when it refused to permit inspection of presidential sites. That crisis was resolved only when the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, went to Baghdad and negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the Iraqi president.[37]

The bottom line, however, was that the United States, with significant help from a number of friends, allies, and the UN Security Council, was generally successful in keeping Saddam Hussein in what Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called a "strategic box." By mid-1998, this policy was losing support from the Arab states, which felt that the Iraqi people were being unfairly punished for the misbehavior of their rulers, and from states such as Russia, France, and China that had major political and financial interests in Iraq. The international consensus was preserved, however, primarily because of the unrelenting intransigence and belligerence of the Iraqi leader.

Iran

The other target of dual containment, Iran, posed a very different set of problems. The dual containment policy called for Iran to (1) cease its support of international terrorism and subversion, (2) end its violent opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace talks, and (3) halt its efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. President Bush had made a hopeful reference to Iran in his inaugural address in January 1989, saying, "Goodwill begets goodwill. Good faith can be a spiral that endlessly moves on."[38] However, there was no talk of goodwill by the Clinton administration. Instead, US officials developed a special vocabulary in which Iran was routinely branded as a "rogue," "terrorist," "outlaw," or "backlash" state. This relentless drumfire of attacks—the mirror image of Iranian depictions of the United States as the "Great Satan"—had its effects in the media, in the Congress, in the public, and in the attitudes of lower-level bureaucrats. With a Democrat in the White House and the Republicans in control of the Congress, a domestic political contest developed over which party could be most vigorous in promoting US policies to deal with Iran.

The debate was galvanized in 1995 when the US oil company Conoco announced that it had signed a $1 billion contract with Iran to develop the Sirri gas field in the Persian Gulf. Although perfectly legal, the prospect that this deal would breach the wall of containment around Iran generated such a wave of outrage that the company was forced to renounce it. Congress and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) began preparing legislation that would end all trade with Iran and punish any corporations that engaged in investments there. President Clinton, who was preparing for his reelection campaign, quickly preempted this by issuing two executive orders that made it illegal for American oil companies to operate in Iran and established penalties for any US citizen or corporation doing business with Iran.[39] Both decisions were announced by senior administration officials before major Jewish organizations. The US business community, apparently intimidated by the public outcry, remained silent on the matter.[40]

This process was replayed in presidential election year 1996. Congress prepared a bill that would impose sanctions on any foreign corporation that invested $20 million or more in the Iranian oil and gas sector. Libya was later added on the floor of the Senate, and the bill became known as the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA). Although the bill was certain to create serious problems with America's allies, the Congress saw ILSA as an opportunity to take a public stand against terrorism. The bill passed 415–0 and was signed into law by President Clinton.

In May 1997, Seyyed Mohammed Khatami was elected to a four-year term as president of Iran in a stunning electoral surprise. He conducted a grassroots campaign on the issues of rule of law, civil society, and dialogue among competing ideologies. His campaign struck a resonant chord with the Iranian population, particularly among women and the burgeoning population of young people, many of whom had no memory of the ancient regime. Paired against the well-known speaker of the Majlis (parliament), who represented revolutionary orthodoxy, Khatami attracted the largest number of voters in Iranian history and won a decisive victory with 69 percent of the vote. He carried all of the urban centers in Iran and virtually every province. In August, his reformist cabinet was accepted without exception by the Majlis.

Although Khatami was widely regarded as a candidate of domestic issues, it was his foreign policy moves that attracted the most attention during the first year of his term. In December 1997, Iran played host to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, where it won plaudits for its conciliatory positions and moderation. Iran called for closer cooperation with the UN, an institution it had shunned as a Western tool after the revolution. Iran also began a concerted effort to improve its relations with Saudi Arabia and its other Arab neighbors in the Persian Gulf region, with some substantial initial success.

In January 1998, Khatami made an unprecedented "Address to the American People" in the form of an interview on CNN.[41] He praised the achievements of American civilization, went as far as an Iranian politician could go in expressing regret for the hostage crisis, and spelled out very clearly Iran's positions on all of the major issues of concern to the United States.

> On terrorism: "Any form of killing of innocent men and women who are not involved in confrontations is terrorism. It must be condemned, and we, in our turn, condemn every form of it in the world."
>
> On the peace process: "We have declared our opposition to the Middle East peace process, because we believe it will not succeed. At the same time, we have clearly said that we don't intend to impose our views on others or to stand in their way."
>
> On weapons of mass destruction: "We are not a nuclear power and do not intend to become one."

Washington responded to the Khatami initiative cautiously but generally positively.[42] The United States toned down its rhetoric and took some small steps to improve relations. But problems remained. Less than sixty days after Khatami took office, the French oil company Total, together with state-owned partners Gazprom of Russia and Petronas of Malaysia, concluded a $2 billion deal to develop an Iranian gas field. These negotiations, which had been under way since Conoco withdrew in 1995, placed Total and its partners in apparent violation of ILSA, which mandated US sanctions against any company investing more than $20 million in the Iranian oil and gas sector.[43]

In May 1998, the United States announced that it would waive the provisions of ILSA on grounds of national security. That decision was due almost entirely to pressure from America's European allies, but it was nevertheless received positively in Tehran.[44] The United States also announced a major redeployment of its Persian Gulf forces, sharply reducing the number of ships and aircraft permanently stationed in the region. This was due primarily to cost factors and personnel pressures, but again, it was received positively by Tehran. There was growing awareness among Washington strategists that the initial assumption that the United States alone could confront both Iran and Iraq may have been exaggerated. At a minimum, as the threat from Iran appeared to be declining, the United States could ill afford to deliberately cultivate enemies.

On June 17, 1998, Secretary of State Albright delivered a major speech that responded almost point by point to the issues that Khatami had addressed in his CNN interview six months earlier.[45] The speech was notable for its conciliatory tone and for the absence of the rhetoric that had characterized US statements about Iran over the previous five years. The speech offered no specific new policies or initiatives, but it held out the prospect for a new beginning:

> We are ready to explore further ways to build mutual confidence and avoid misunderstandings. The Islamic Republic should consider parallel steps. If such a process can be initiated and sustained in a way that addresses the concerns of both sides, then we in the United States can see the prospect of a very different relationship. As the wall of mistrust comes down, we can develop with the Islamic Republic, when it is ready, a road map leading to normal relations. Obviously, two decades of mistrust cannot be erased overnight. The gap between us remains wide. But it is time to test the possibilities for bridging this gap.[46]

CONCLUSION

By the end of the twentieth century, the United States had become a Persian Gulf power in its own right. Its political, military, and economic footprint in the region was greater even than that of the governments of the region themselves. Its role as security guarantor was not in doubt, and its prestige and influence were at their zenith.

Less clear was what the future might hold and how the United States might choose to exercise its power in its new role as the sole superpower. History provided no reliable guidance. For more than a half century, the United States had experimented, often clumsily, with stratagems of all sorts in a variety of circumstances. In the end, as in the Cold War, its interests were preserved, and it emerged as the dominant power. The challenge for the future would be to blend military power with diplomacy in a region that could no longer be sequestered from the broader issues of the Middle East, international politics, and the global economy.

Notes

1. These early contacts led to a treaty with the sultanate of Muscat and Oman in 1833, which is still recalled on occasions of state with Oman.

2. The following comments draw on the author's article "The Evolution of US Strategy Toward the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Regions," in Alvin Z. Rubinstein, ed., *The Great Game: Rivalry in the Persian Gulf and South Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 49–80.

3. For a more detailed account of this period, see Michael A. Palmer, *Guardians of the Gulf: The Growth of American Involvement in the Persian Gulf, 1833–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

4. A detailed account of this episode and its implications can be found in Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran* (New York: Random House, 1985), 14ff.

5. See Chapter 3 by Mark Gasiorowski in this volume.

6. For a more detailed account, see James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 204–208. Israel had a well-developed strategy, known as the Doctrine of the Periphery, to outflank its hostile Arab neighbors by promoting relations with non-Arab states on the fringes of the conflict. In the case of Iran, this took the form of a very close strategic relationship for more than twenty years.

7. Cited in J. C. Hurewitz, *The Persian Gulf After Iran's Revolution,* Foreign Policy Association Headline Series 244, April 1979, 22.

8. Former secretary of defense James Schlesinger drew attention to this fact in an article questioning whether the RDJTF was rapid, deployable, or even a force. See "Rapid(?) Deployment(?) Force(?)," *Washington Post,* September 24, 1980.

9. Quoted in Richard Halloran, "Special U.S. Force for Persian Gulf Is Growing Swiftly," *New York Times*, October 25, 1982.

10. For a detailed examination of this episode, see Theodore Draper, *A Very Thin Line: The Iran-Contra Affair* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991).

11. The casualty figures for the Iran-Iraq war are often exaggerated. Mohsen Rafiqdust, the former head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Force, told Robert Fisk of the *Independent* (June 25, 1995) that 220,000 Iranians were killed and 400,000 wounded during the Iran-Iraq war. That is roughly consistent with Iranian official statements and with independent Western estimates. Iraq has never published any figures on its losses, but Amatzia Baram, a specialist on Iraq at Haifa University, has estimated that 150,000 Iraqis were killed (*Jerusalem Quarterly* 49 [Winter 1989], 85–86). If the standard ratio of two wounded for every man killed is applied, Iraq may have had 300,000 wounded. Thus, an informed estimate of total losses on both sides would equal approximately 370,000 killed and some 700,000 wounded, which is imprecise but plausible. In the case of Iraq, this casualty level is roughly comparable to US losses in the Civil War.

12. The substantial deployment of US forces to the Gulf was hastened—as was congressional approval—by the Iraqi missile attack on the USS *Stark* on May 17, 1987. Although the buildup was intended to counter Iran, the Iraqi attack galvanized public attention and underlined the threat to shipping in the Gulf.

13. Iraq was much better equipped than Iran, and it fired three to four missiles to every Iranian missile. The only confirmed use of poison gas was by Iraq—against Iranian troop formations and some civilian sites in Kurdish territory. For a more detailed examination of this armed negotiation, see Gary Sick, "Slouching Toward Settlement: The Internationalization of the Iran-Iraq War, 1987–88," in Nikki Keddie and Mark Gasiorowski, eds., *Neither East Nor West: Iran, the Soviet Union, and the United States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 219–246.

14. Letter to the secretary-general of March 28, *FBIS,* March 30, 1988.

15. One mine struck the USS *Samuel B. Roberts,* and on April 18, 1988, US forces hit two Iranian oil platforms, Nasr (near Sirri Island) and Salman (in the joint Iran-Oman Lavan field), cutting Iran's oil production by some fifty thousand barrels per day. In the same action, two Iranian frigates were sunk, another was severely damaged, and four gunboats were damaged or sunk. In 1996, Iran brought a suit against the United States in the International Court of Justice seeking compensation for the loss of the oil platforms on the grounds that the attacks were a violation of international law and contrary to the terms of existing US-Iranian agreements.

16. The bitter dispute between Iran and Saudi Arabia over Iran's participation in the annual *hajj* deepened the distrust between these two states. Saudi Arabia stepped up its direct support for Iraq, apparently permitting Iraqi aircraft to utilize Saudi airfields during raids on Iranian oil facilities in the southern Gulf. On April 26, 1988, Saudi Arabia broke diplomatic relations with Iran.

17. *FBIS,* July 21, 1988. On July 25, Khomeini made a six-minute appearance on television from the balcony of his residence. He appeared extremely frail and did not speak.

18. For example, see Murray Waas and Douglas Frantz, "US Gave Data to Iraq Three Months Before Invasion; Persian Gulf: Documents Show Intelligence Sharing with Baghdad Lasted Longer Than Previously Indicated," *Los Angeles Times,* March 10, 1992, 1 (one of a series of investigative reports). See also "News Conference, Rep. Jack Brooks (D-TX), Rep. Charles

Schumer (D-NY): Special Prosecutor Criminal Dealings with Iraq Prior to Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," *Federal News Service,* July 9, 1992.

19. A verbatim text of Glaspie's meeting with Saddam Hussein on July 25, 1990, was later released by the Iraqi government and was published by the *New York Times* on September 23, 1990, 19. Glaspie, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 20, 1991, characterized the transcript as about 80 percent accurate, but with some key passages edited out.

20. See Chapter 12 by Robert O. Freedman and Chapter 7 by Georgiy Mirsky in this volume.

21. Speech by President Bush from the Oval Office, January 16, 1991, two hours after the bombing campaign against Iraqi positions had begun.

22. See, for example, "Needless Deaths in the Gulf War: Civilian Casualties During the Air Campaign and Violations of the Laws of War," *Middle East Watch Report,* Human Rights Watch, New York, November 1991.

23. According to official counts, allied deaths were 146 Americans (35 by friendly fire), 24 British (9 by American fire), 2 Frenchmen, 1 Italian, and 39 among various Arab allies. Baghdad has never given an official count of its casualties, but postwar analyses concluded that Iraq's uniformed losses were far smaller than previously estimated, perhaps as low as 1,500 deaths. Estimates of civilian casualties were uncertain and varied greatly from one observer to another. See John G. Heidenrich, "The Gulf War: How Many Iraqis Died?" *Foreign Policy* 90 (Spring 1993), 108–125. The Associated Press on March 9, 1993, provided an overview of the various estimates.

24. Patrick E. Tyler, "After the War: Washington; Iraq: Domestic and Diplomatic Concern," *New York Times,* March 15, 1991, 13.

25. Andrew Rosenthal, "After the War; U.S., Fearing Iraqi Breakup, Is Termed Ready to Accept a Hussein Defeat of Rebels," *New York Times,* March 27, 1991, 1, 9.

26. William Safire, "Essay; Follow the Kurds to Save Iraq," *New York Times,* March 28, 1991, 1, 18.

27. "Bush 'Miscalculated' Saddam Hussein's Resilience," *Washington Post,* January 15, 1996.

28. The following analysis draws extensively on the author's article "Rethinking Dual Containment," *Survival: The IISS Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 5–32.

29. Martin Indyk, "The Clinton Administration's Approach to the Middle East," keynote address to the Soref Symposium on "Challenges to US Interests in the Middle East: Obstacles and Opportunities," *Proceedings of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy,* May 18–19, 1993, 1–8. Martin Indyk at the time of this speech had just joined the National Security Council staff. He later became the US ambassador to Israel and then assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs.

30. Indyk, "The Clinton Administration's Approach to the Middle East," 4.

31. See, for example, the remarks by Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, March 26, 1997, as released by the Office of the Spokesman, US Department of State.

32. Elaine Sciolino, "CIA Asks Congress for Money to Rein in Iraq and Iran," *New York Times,* April 12, 1995, 1.

33. All of these operations were publicly confirmed after the event by former senior officials of the US government. See Don Oberdorfer, "US Had Covert Plan to Oust Iraq's Saddam, Bush Adviser Asserts; Effort to Remove Leader Came 'Pretty Close,'" *Washington Post,* January 20, 1993, 1; and ABC News, "Unfinished Business—the CIA and Saddam Hussein," transcript no. 97062601-j13, June 26, 1997. There have also been detailed reports in the *Los Angeles Times, New York Times,* and other media outlets.

34. Initially, Iraq was permitted to sell up to $2 billion of oil in two ninety-day periods after each authorization. The first sales began on December 10, 1995. In 1998, the terms were extended to permit total sales of $4.5 billion—more than the Iraqis were physically capable of producing, given the low price of oil at the time. The sales contracts were monitored closely by the UN, and the proceeds were allotted to humanitarian relief and repayment of claims from the war and to cover UN expenses in Iraq.

35. United Nations Special Commissioner Rolf Ekeus estimated that Iraq deliberately deprived itself of more than $100 billion in revenues by refusing to cooperate with UN weapons inspections. See "For the Record," *Washington Post,* January 31, 1997.

36. This attack was particularly controversial since the targets were in the south and unrelated to the ground attack in the north.

37. See "Memorandum of Understanding Between the United Nations and the Republic of Iraq," Associated Press, February 24, 1998.

38. See the text of the inaugural address in the *New York Times,* January 21, 1989, 10. Iran welcomed this remark and responded by helping to free the US hostages in Lebanon. It is a sore point with Iran that this gesture, in their view, was never reciprocated by the United States.

39. See Executive Order 12957 of March 15, 1995, and Executive Order 12959 of May 6, 1995.

40. For a detailed analysis of the politics associated with the developments of Iranian sanctions, see Laurie Lande, "Second Thoughts," *International Economy,* May–June 1997, 44–49.

41. The transcript of this interview with Iranian president Mohammed Khatami was posted on the CNN website immediately after it aired on January 7, 1998. Large portions of the text were published in a number of newspapers the following day.

42. Even before the Khatami election, many senior policy observers and former US officials were calling for changes in the dual containment strategy. These voices included two former national security advisers, a former secretary of defense, three former assistant secretaries of state for Near Eastern affairs, and the former commander of US forces in the Persian Gulf, among others.

43. The trigger level had been reduced automatically from $40 million to $20 million on the first anniversary of the legislation in August 1997.

44. The European Union threatened to take the case to the World Trade Organization if the United States imposed sanctions on the French company, on grounds that the US policy was in violation of international trade agreements.

45. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, Remarks at 1998 Asia Society Dinner, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, New York, June 17, 1998, as released by the Office of the Spokesman, June 18, 1998, US Department of State.

46. Ibid.

CHAPTER 14

THE IRAQ WAR OF 2003

Why Did the United States Decide to Invade?

Steve A. Yetiv

History offers no bigger question: Why do nations choose to go to war instead of pursuing other strategies for achieving their ends? This question has been salient for ages, and it is no less germane today for anyone trying to understand why the United States decided to invade Iraq in March 2003.

It will take years to discover if Iraq and its allies can address its many security, political, and economic problems. Whatever happens, the question of why the United States invaded will remain salient in understanding Iraq and the Middle East, as well as the broader question of why countries go to war. In this sense, the Iraq war is both a fascinating case study and also a classic issue in world affairs that ties to the massive literature on war and peace across multiple disciplines.

The question of why the United States decided to invade Iraq is all the more intriguing now that we know that the invasion and occupation, while felling a brutal dictator and bringing important elements of democracy to Iraq, was so difficult and costly. Indeed, from the initiation of Operation Iraqi Freedom until 2017, US armed forces suffered more than 4,400 casualties and more than 30,000 soldiers wounded in action.

Hundreds of soldiers from other countries were killed as well, and many thousands of Iraqis lost their lives. The conflict has cost the United States an inestimable fortune as well, which includes the impact of the war on the US budget and economy, on the health of the soldiers returning home, on the continuing need to contain radical groups such as the Islamic State, and in terms of the broader opportunity costs of having spent much money on war and subsequent occupation that could have been used elsewhere.

Many of the central documents regarding why the United States invaded Iraq will not be declassified for some time, and key policymakers have not yet allowed substantial on-the-record interviews that might be used, along with these documents, to piece together a more comprehensive explanation of American behavior. Nonetheless, it is possible to offer at least a sensible sketch of the key reasons for going to war. This chapter first describes the events leading up to the war and then considers the primary and possible secondary motivations for going to war.

THE EVENTS PRECEDING THE 2003 WAR

Following the end of the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf crisis triggered by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Iraq's record of defiance was not in doubt, although the decision to choose war against Iraq was controversial. Iraq had defied sixteen United Nations resolutions passed between 1991 and 2002, starting with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 687, which was the most important. It mandated full disclosure of all of Iraq's ballistic missile stocks (above a range of 150 kilometers) and production facilities, all nuclear materials, chemical and biological weapons and facilities, and cooperation in their destruction. Paragraphs 10–12 required Iraq to "unconditionally undertake not to use, develop, construct, or acquire" weapons of mass destruction (WMD). UNSC Resolution 687 also forced Iraq to accept the UN-demarcated border with Kuwait, the sovereignty of Kuwaiti territory, and UN peacekeepers on the Iraq-Kuwait border.[1]

In his speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002, President Bush demanded that Iraq comply immediately with the previous sixteen UN resolutions. He claimed that because Iraq was continuing to pursue the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and missile delivery systems, it represented a "grave and gathering danger" to American and global security. He pointed out that the United Nations had struggled with Iraq for a dozen years to ensure its compliance with the demands of UNSC Resolution 687 and that Iraq had defied its provisions, thus creating a credibility crisis regarding UN resolve. He held out the prospect that UN inspectors could find Saddam's WMD, but he also asserted that the United States was willing to act unilaterally, observing that it is not possible to "stand by and do nothing while dangers gather."

Washington pushed hard to pass the seventeenth resolution against Iraq on November 8, 2002. UNSC Resolution 1441 required Baghdad to admit inspectors from the UN Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency and to comply fully with all foregoing resolutions.[2] The resolution, which was passed unanimously by the UN Security Council, suggested the use of force against Iraq if it committed a "material breach" or serious infraction in cooperating with efforts to identify and destroy its WMD capability. However, the notion of "material breach" was interpreted differently among the Security Council members.

France, Russia, and China preferred to avoid war and certainly opposed war on Washington's and London's terms and timetable, yet none of the three threatened to veto Resolution 1441. However, France and, to some extent, Russia did attempt to change some of the resolution's language in order to put the brakes on a move toward war, limiting such authorization to the case of serious violations by Baghdad.[3]

For its part, Iraq moved to comply with Resolution 1441 by allowing UN inspectors back into the country and by submitting twelve thousand pages and several compact discs of information to the United Nations, supposedly describing its weapons capabilities. Baghdad asserted that it lacked WMD programs and had no WMD in storage. Unfortunately, these disclosures were viewed as incomplete.

Chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix issued a report in January 2003 that was critical of Iraq's "efforts to disarm and cooperate with UN inspectors."[4] He observed that serious questions remained about Iraq's chemical and biological weapons capability, which he believed was not accurately or fully disclosed in Iraq's report to the United Nations. Not surprisingly, the Bush administration found Iraq's lack of cooperation highly problematic. Secretary of State Colin Powell asserted that American experts had found the Iraqi declaration to the United Nations to "be anything but currently accurate, full, or complete" and that the declaration "totally fails to meet the resolution's requirements."[5] As Powell explained to the UN on February 14, 2003, "We haven't accounted for the anthrax, we haven't accounted for the botulinum, VX, bulk biological agents, growth media, 30,000 chemical and biological munitions."[6] Feeling the rising tide of international condemnation, Saddam responded by granting greater access to UN inspectors in Iraq. He may have thought that he could foil US efforts to gather international support for an invasion of Iraq without revealing the fact that there were actually very few or no WMD in the country. On February 10, 2003, Blix offered a more optimistic account of Iraq's cooperation, seeing a new "positive attitude on the part of the Iraqi regime," and asked for more time for inspections.[7]

While Russia, Germany, and France seized on Blix's report to thwart the American and British drive toward war, Washington and London proved recalcitrant. They may well have concluded that Saddam was simply engaging in more games with UN inspectors; his track record suggested no real interest in completely ridding the country of WMD, and inspections were therefore doomed to fail. From their perspective, if Saddam did have these weapons, he would not help UN inspectors find them, and without his help, they could remain hidden. Meanwhile, even if they did find WMD, they could not be confident that they had uncovered all of them or that, after they left, Saddam would not rebuild some of the weapons programs.

Partly as a result of this skepticism and partly because Iraq, in the view of the United States and Britain, did not meet the conditions of UN Resolution 1441 or previous UN resolutions, the United States and Britain drafted an eighteenth resolution against Iraq, which, in essence, called for war. To pass this resolution, the United States needed to get the support of nine of the fifteen Security Council members while avoiding a veto by any of the four other permanent members of the Security

Council. Although the Security Council had unanimously supported Resolution 1441, the underlying differences among the members on going to war complicated US efforts to pass the new resolution. Russia threatened to veto it, although Moscow avoided an open breach with Washington. Russian president Vladimir Putin had supported earlier US efforts to contain and defang Iraq and had lent tentative support for war, albeit on a much slower timetable, but was hard-pressed to endorse a war that was viewed in Russia and many other countries as rushed or ill-advised.

France interpreted Resolution 1441 as a warning to Iraq to comply more fully with UN inspectors, not as a casus belli. After France threatened to veto the eighteenth resolution, possibly with backing from China and Russia, the United States and Britain shifted their strategy, especially when they learned that some of the smaller countries on the UN Security Council would not support their action.

The United States and Britain offered somewhat different justifications for war, but they were convinced that Iraq's violation of the previous seventeen UN resolutions gave them sufficient basis for using force. Citing this rationale, they presented Saddam, his sons, and key Iraqi elites with an ultimatum: leave the country within forty-eight hours or face war. Saddam rejected the ultimatum, possibly fearing that the United States would eventually track him down wherever he went or perhaps believing that he could survive the American-led onslaught and eventually resurrect his regime. In retrospect, it seems likely that he and his generals had plans to stand down and disperse into a guerrilla movement, with greater chances of evicting American forces from Iraq through a war of attrition. The minutes of a meeting of his top commanders, chaired by Saddam, support this interpretation.[8]

Operation Iraqi Freedom was launched against Iraq on March 19, 2003, with a massive air attack, an assault referred to with overcharged bravado as "shock and awe." Bombs struck their targets precisely, carrying a message that the United States was serious about change in the Middle East. Saddam's regime fell to this massive onslaught, but the security and political debris that was left in its wake would continue to bedevil the United States and its allies, who were bent on rebuilding Iraq in the Western image.

THE KEY MOTIVATIONS FOR GOING TO WAR

States offer different reasons for war, some of which are biased and would be hotly contested by their adversaries and probably by some of their allies as well. The United States offered three reasons for invading Iraq.[9] Although we should not accept them uncritically, and they don't capture the full story of American motivations, they were certainly central. We can only offer educated guesses at this stage given that myriad documents remain classified, but a portrait of decision making does emerge.

First, the United States was legitimately concerned about Iraqi WMD programs. On August 14, 2002, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice chaired a meeting that laid out US goals in Iraq in a draft of a national security presidential directive entitled "Iraq: Goals, Objectives, and Strategy." President Bush signed the directive, making it official policy, on August 29. The document emphasized the desire of the US government to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in order to eliminate its

WMD, to end its threat to the region, to create democracy in Iraq, and to contain the threat of a WMD attack on the United States or its allies.[10]

In June 2001, the CIA reported that although the evidence was not fully clear, it appeared that Iraq had used the period between 1998 and 2001 to rebuild prohibited WMD programs.[11] In October 2002, a special national intelligence estimate more clearly articulated those accusations: "Iraq has continued its weapons of mass destruction programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade."[12] Some observers claim that the Bush team had already decided on war even before the 2002 intelligence estimate, but that is not fully clear.

In one key speech, President Bush warned that if the Iraqi regime were "able to produce, buy, or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, it could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year."[13] In September 2002, he cited a British intelligence report indicating that Iraq could launch a chemical or biological attack forty-five minutes after the order was given to do so.[14] The administration also described Iraq as capable of using WMD against the United States, a position that was not shared by the intelligence analysts who wrote the October 2002 national intelligence estimate.[15]

Senior administration officials repeatedly asserted that Iraq sought to rebuild its nuclear program and obfuscate the existence of nuclear facilities by placing them underground or camouflaging them. In this view, inspections would not be able to detect or halt these activities, and even if they could, Iraq would resume them once the inspectors left the country.[16] Even if Iraq did not yet possess nuclear capabilities, the administration believed that Iraq had the intellectual infrastructure and intent to produce them. In the eyes of administration officials, that alone was enough of a threat after 9/11 to justify US action against Iraq. The administration did not trumpet this argument, however, because it was less marketable than other arguments for war.[17]

The attacks of September 11 raised the stakes high enough that the administration had a low level of tolerance for WMD in the hands of a dictator, especially one with Saddam's record of aggression. Cheney asserted in August 2002: "If the United States could have preempted 9/11, we would have, no question. Should we be able to prevent another, much more devastating attack, we will, no question."[18] From this perspective, irrefutable facts about Iraq's capabilities and intentions were unnecessary; Saddam had given the administration enough reason to have serious doubts about his intentions in a post-9/11 environment. As Bush asserted in his January 28, 2003, State of the Union speech, a "brutal dictator, with a history of reckless aggression, with ties to terrorism, with great potential wealth, will not be permitted to dominate a vital region and threaten the United States."[19] It is possible that once President Bush became concerned that Iraq could have WMD post-9/11, little intelligence information could change his mind, because it would have been next to impossible for any intelligence information to rule out that scenario in the future.[20]

Bush asserted that he changed his mind about how to address the threat from Saddam Hussein after September 11, indicating that he could "only imagine the destruction possible if an enemy dictator passed his WMD to terrorists."[21] Bush described Iraq, Iran, and North Korea in his now-famous January 29, 2002, State of the Union message as part of an "axis of evil" against which preemptive force might have to be used. Later, on September 28, 2002, Bush elaborated on the Iraq problem: "The danger to our country is grave and growing. The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons, is rebuilding facilities to make more and . . . is seeking a nuclear bomb, and with fissile material could build one within a year."[22]

A second rationale for going to war was Iraq's purported ties to terrorism. Bush claimed that he received information in the summer of 2002 that the al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorist Abu Musab al Zarqawi had been directing efforts to smuggle chemical material from northern Iraq into the United States and, although Bush was unsure if Saddam knew that Zarqawi was in Iraq, it raised a red flag for him.[23]

The administration's assertion that Iraq had supported al-Qa'ida was buoyed by the fact that a majority of Americans (53 to 64 percent in an August 2002 Gallup poll) believed that Saddam was directly involved in the 9/11 attacks.[24] Prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Bush administration was not especially concerned about al-Qa'ida. Policy tended to side with the Clinton administration, which had worked through domestic law enforcement agencies in an attempt to eliminate the al-Qa'ida threat. One exception was the unsuccessful effort in President Clinton's embattled second term to assassinate bin Laden with a missile strike at an al-Qa'ida training camp in Afghanistan. The Bush administration was more fixed on the al-Qa'ida threat than the Clinton administration, yet it failed to take timely action to address it. Reflecting the broader tenor among high-level Bush administration officials, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice was slow to respond to suggestions made in a key memo by counterterrorism coordinator Richard Clarke to take action against al-Qa'ida, and she was subsequently accused of ignoring the threat prior to 9/11.[25] Ironically, on September 10, she was in the process of preparing a national security directive on how to eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida.[26]

After September 11, the Bush administration appeared to be concerned about, even obsessed with, the connection between WMD and terrorist organizations, as reflected in many speeches by top American officials, including Vice President Cheney.[27] To what extent the Bush administration manipulated intelligence to support the war may not be fully known for some time. Clearly administration officials were concerned that Iraq could be supporting transnational terrorists. Evidence for this interpretation can be found in the now-famous Downing Street memo, which summarizes discussion in a July 23, 2002, meeting when British prime minister Tony Blair conferred with his top security advisers. In the memo (actually the minutes of the meeting), the head of Britain's MI6 intelligence service reports on his high-level visit to Washington: "Bush wanted to remove Saddam through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."[28]

Even though the link between al-Qa'ida and Iraq was tenuous at best,[29] it was Saddam's misfortune that Iraq represented precisely what the Bush administration feared after 9/11: a dictator developing WMD with connections to terrorist groups. Bush described his post-9/11 perception of Saddam in an interview with Bob Woodward: "All his terrible features became much more threatening. Keeping Saddam in a box looked less and less feasible to me."[30] In Rumsfeld's words, "We acted because we saw the existing evidence in a new light, through the prism of our experience on September 11," a perspective that was obsessed with America's vulnerability to states with WMD and connections to terrorists.[31]

Even Secretary Powell appeared to be persuaded to some extent that Iraq posed a threat, although he may have been playing the role of obedient soldier to the president and vice president. In his crucial speech to the UN on September 12, 2002, he warned that Saddam had used terrorism for decades: "Saddam was a supporter of terrorism long before these terrorist networks had a name, and this support continues. The nexus of poisons and terror is new. The nexus of Iraq and terror is old. The combination is lethal."[32]

Some observers might argue that the administration may have used the WMD threat to justify a war that it had decided to launch even before 9/11, but that is not likely. Not only did the 9/11 attacks give the administration a basis for garnering public support for war, which it had previously lacked, but the strategic priorities of the administration changed dramatically after the attacks.

Indeed, having been advised in the hours following the attacks that al-Qa'ida may well have planned the attacks on New York and Washington, Donald Rumsfeld reportedly asked for the existing military plans for an invasion of Iraq; his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, also pushed for an immediate attack on Iraq, ahead of an invasion of Afghanistan.[33] Meanwhile, President Bush asked for contingency plans to attack Iraq if it were shown that Iraq was involved in the attacks or sought to exploit the crisis for its own gain.[34] Like Wolfowitz, Bush made it known early on that he thought Iraq was involved in the 9/11 attacks,[35] and he repeated the mantra that Iraq had long-standing ties to terrorist groups that were capable of and willing to deliver weapons of mass death.[36] His information no doubt came, in part, from the CIA. On October 7, 2002, George Tenet, then director of the Central Intelligence Agency, sent Senator Bob Graham, the chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, unclassified information that indicated the existence of a long-term relationship between al-Qa'ida and Iraq, including "solid reporting of senior level contacts between Iraq and al-Qa'ida going back a decade."[37]

In addition to the administration's concerns about Iraq possessing WMD and having established ties with al-Qa'ida, President Bush and his advisers had a third reason for going to war with Iraq. It was their intention to topple the autocratic regime of Saddam Hussein and democratize Iraq, so that they could then sow the seeds of democracy more broadly in the Middle East. Although the Bush administration did not initially focus on democratization as a rationale for war, it would be a mistake to assume that it was simply an afterthought.

Whereas President George H. W. Bush had been repeatedly criticized for lacking vision, his son exemplified vision, whatever one thinks of its merits, in the post-9/11 period. Although his vision may have come from the gut, it adhered to a unilinear view of history. In contrast to the cyclical view of history, which sees the afflictions of international relations repeating themselves over time, President George W. Bush held a firm belief in human progress—in this case, the democratization of a challenging region.[38]

On the evening of September 11, 2001, in the wake of the attacks in New York and Washington, well before the US decision to go to war in Iraq, Bush reassured the nation that the United States would "go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world."[39] He repeated that mantra ahead of the Iraq invasion, and he continued to repeat it throughout the long war that followed, emphasizing that the United States would support and spread democratic ideas.[40]

The objective of democratizing Iraq and the Middle East lost traction as time wore on, especially after WMD failed to turn up in Iraq and the al-Qa'ida connection to Saddam remained elusive. This approach was a sharp break with past US foreign policy in the region. Indeed, even the Clinton administration, which was proud of its support for human rights abroad, did not attempt to launch a democratization drive in the Middle East. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright explained US restraint in this region: "We have been afraid to push too hard for democracy, especially in Arab countries. We worry, perhaps with reason, that if radical Islamists obtain power through an election, there would be no more elections . . . and instability might be created."[41] By contrast, Condoleezza Rice, who became secretary of state in early 2005, held a different view: "For sixty years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East, and we achieved neither. Now we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people."[42]

In the administration's view, democratization could undermine the demons that drive transnational terrorism,[43] a theme that dominated the administration's list of priorities by 2004. In his State of the Union address on February 2, 2004, President Bush urged Saudi Arabia and Egypt to "show the way toward democracy in the region."[44]

Beyond these three reasons, the decision to go to war was, more importantly, motivated by the notion of preemption, by faulty intelligence, and by overconfidence. I discuss these factors below.

THE CONCEPTUAL MOTIVATION FOR WAR: PREEMPTION VERSUS CONTAINMENT

The motivations for war discussed above are insufficient to explain the decision to go to war. After all, if WMD were so threatening, why didn't the Bush administration attack North Korea, which was a far greater threat than Iraq? If fighting terrorism was the key objective, administration officials could just as easily have decided to focus on strangulating al-Qa'ida globally rather than executing regime change in Iraq, even if they believed there was a Saddam-al-Qa'ida connection. If they were concerned about WMD and terrorism, administration officials might have decided to ratchet up their containment of Iraq with increased military, political, and economic pressures instead of invasion and occupation. Why did they choose to go to war?

Simply put, after 9/11, the Bush administration did not believe that containment would work. The perception that Iraq had WMD and connections to terrorism further drove the change in American foreign policy away from containment and toward preemption, and preemption became the conceptual basis for invading Iraq.

To be sure, prior to 9/11, the administration had viewed the policy of containment as problematic. As Bush pointed out, "I was not happy with our policy" since it was not toppling Saddam or changing his behavior. But prior to September 11, "a president could see a threat and contain it or deal with it in a variety of ways without fear of that threat materializing on our own soil."[45] That describes, roughly, the disposition of the Clinton administration, as well as that of the first Bush administration. Those earlier administrations were content with strengthening the containment effort against Saddam Hussein through "smart sanctions," which aimed at preventing Iraq from obtaining military goods while relaxing the embargo on trade items that Iraq's people needed. Prior to 9/11, Iraq was barely mentioned by top officials, except as a potential long-term threat, even though consensus had developed among them that Saddam's regime needed to be removed; regime change had become official American policy in 1998.[46]

After September 11, US policy toward Iraq changed dramatically from regime change through political means to regime change through the use of force.[47] The Bush Doctrine of preemption was articulated in the State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, and then formally outlined in the National Security Strategy of September 2002. It was based partly on the notion that deterrence and containment may not succeed, and it emphasized the need to resort in appropriate cases to preemptive measures.[48] For Paul Wolfowitz, 9/11 was the "most significant thing" that generated a change in US foreign policy, and he cited it as one of the top ten events, if not the top event, of the "last one hundred years."[49]

The United States had always practiced preemption when necessary, but it had never openly presented it as a strategy and then used it so brazenly to justify war on another country. September 11, however, altered the stakes. As President Bush put it, September 11 made it such that the "doctrine of containment just doesn't hold any water."[50] Bush asserted in a speech in Cincinnati in October 2002 that the United States had to take preemptive action because after September 11, the country could not "wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud."[51] America's threshold for terrorism had been lowered enough that Iraq became a key target for vigorous American action. Containment was a passive approach; now the United States would become much more proactive.

Regime change through the use of force was one key element of the broader policy of preemption, but the Bush administration also sought to stop terrorist attacks before they occurred through other means. Regime change was the most overt and the riskiest of these means.

Strategic interaction between the United States and Iraq probably fed into the preference for preemption. If Washington and Baghdad could not trust each other, that increased the United States' proclivity to go to war. Mutual misconceptions and misperceptions that had marked the relationship for decades, chiefly from the time of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, likely fed into this dynamic.[52]

FAULTY INTELLIGENCE

Wars historically have often been started because of miscalculations about the strength of other actors and the threats they pose. The Bush administration's conceptual shift toward preemption and war in Iraq was driven by faulty intelligence on Iraq's WMD and connections to al-Qa'ida. The administration had extremely poor intelligence and probably manipulated intelligence as well.[53] That fed into decision making and made an attack seem more crucial to execute. Describing the general decision-making process, Paul Pillar, the national intelligence officer responsible for Middle East affairs from 2002 to 2005, claimed that the administration ignored official intelligence reports in a shocking manner; other desk officers in the State Department were similarly ignored.[54]

It may never be fully evident to what extent the administration, or particular members within it, manipulated this intelligence to justify war, but clearly the information was important in the decision to go to war. Indeed, poor intelligence created a specter of a much greater Iraqi threat than existed; it facilitated the administration's efforts to gain domestic and, to some extent, international support for war and predisposed key officials to believe that Iraq could be rebuilt and refashioned without the extraordinary challenges that would arise in the postwar period. Accurate intelligence would have made the option of going to war less palatable and more difficult to market.

In any case, the administration insisted that it had made a sound decision based on the evidence at hand, faulty as it was, and challenged criticism that it had cooked the books for war. Reflecting the administration's position, Powell asserted that he was "disappointed" that the intelligence was not on target but the administration had not misled the world and the American people, because government officials had believed what they said about Iraq. "We thought Iraq had stockpiles of WMD."[55]

Two major official inquiries, one by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in 2004 and one by the Robb-Silberman Commission in March 2005, found no evidence that political pressure by the Bush administration had contributed to these intelligence failures.[56] The inquiries did find that Vice President Cheney and others had encouraged analysts to rethink their findings, but this did not lead to different conclusions. However, the commissions did not have access to key White House documents. Moreover, while they found that political pressure by the administration did not contribute to intelligence failures, they left open the question of the extent to which the administration exaggerated the threat from Iraq and, in particular, Iraq's ties to al-Qa'ida to justify war.[57] In fact, one February 2002 declassified document from the Defense Intelligence Agency asserted that Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, a top member of al-Qa'ida in American custody, had intentionally misled American debriefers about Iraq's support for al-Qa'ida and shipments of illicit weapons to the terrorists. The administration repeatedly drew on his questionable testimony, as did Colin Powell in his February 2003 UN speech. Al-Libi withdrew his claims in 2004, but the administration's reliance on this shaky intelligence raised questions about the extent to which the administration dramatized, fabricated, or misunderstood Saddam's connection to al-Qa'ida.[58]

The link between Iraq and al-Qa'ida did not make much sense in the first place. As Saddam Hussein himself emphasized when interviewed by the FBI in 2004, he and bin Laden were very different individuals, with sharply contrasting ideologies and goals, making it nonsensical for Iraq to cooperate with al-Qa'ida.[59] Bin Laden probably viewed Saddam as a corrupt, secular pan-Arabist, an infidel who was fit to be overthrown or killed. Meanwhile, Saddam probably saw bin Laden as an irrational radical who tilted with windmills and had no program or workable ideology of his own. He was a threat to pan-Arabists and nationalists because he promoted a radical version of transnational Islam managed under Taliban-like states. He would target Saddam if he could as the prototype illegitimate and poor Arab leader.

OVERCONFIDENCE

The administration thought that the Iraq war would be far more successful than it turned out to be. In other words, key members likely suffered from overconfidence that made an attack more enticing.[60] For instance, Vice President Richard Cheney, like some others in the Bush cabinet, believed that American forces would be "greeted as liberators."[61] That does not mean that the government as a whole held such a view. The State Department had worked for a year on what was called the "Future of Iraq," a project that clearly underscored the importance of preparing for postwar Iraq. The thousands of pages of reports covered subjects ranging from how to generate and protect oil and agriculture to how to ensure adequate policing in the postwar context. On January 20, 2003, President Bush signed a directive aimed at setting up an "Iraq Postwar Planning Office," which would have representatives from ten American federal agencies. Even so, serious blind spots existed across the government. As noted charitably by Douglas Feith, a former Defense Department official in the Bush administration, aspects of postwar planning were put in motion, but the Iraq insurgency surprised intelligence analysts and policy officials.[62]

Overconfidence, as well as poor policymaking, may well have contributed to such dynamics. We sometimes assume that the outcomes we observe in foreign policy result from purposeful and coordinated action, but they may come about from miscommunication and lack of policy integration. For example, Colin Powell claims that the plan that Bush approved was not put in motion by Rumsfeld and Bremer. That plan did not call for the army to be totally disbanded and Ba'th Party members fired; rather it called for a scaled-down, selective version of that approach. President Bush was "surprised" by the outcome but had to go along with it.[63] In effect, it may well be that Paul Bremer did not execute Bush's wishes, insofar as he understood them, when he decided to formally disband the Iraqi army rather than to vet and retain most of it—and Bush gave him the latitude to do so. This was so problematic that, according to Gordon and Trainor, some in the US Defense Department saw Bremer as having hijacked the Iraqi mission and expanded its political goals in ways that the president and his cabinet had not anticipated.[64] We may not know the exact dynamics until the relevant documents are declassified, but whatever the case, Bush trusted Bremer to carry out the job and did not stop his actions, making those actions the official position of the United States.

OTHER POSSIBLE MOTIVATIONS FOR WAR

Many people around the world felt that the war against Iraq was unnecessary. If the war was not really intended to address some imminent threat from Iraq, they wondered, then what were its real aims?[65] We need not be conspiracy theorists to consider other motivations for war that were not suggested by administration officials in their speeches and actions.

Oil Security and Alternatives to Saudi Energy

Millions of people in the Middle East and around the world believed that the war was about oil. According to a 2000 Pew Research Center opinion poll, 76 percent of those polled in Russia, 75 percent of those polled in France, 54 percent of those polled in Germany, and 44 percent of those polled in Great Britain believed that the war was driven by a "desire to control Iraq's oil."[66] Most Iraqis, it is fair to say, also held this view, which was prominent among both moderate and radical Islamists around the world. For his part, Osama bin Laden asserted in a 1998 interview that the Muslim world and Islam were under assault, noting that others "rob us of our wealth and of our resources and of our oil" and that "our religion is under attack."[67] This view of Americans stealing Middle Eastern oil was fairly constant in statements by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates.

Although the United States obviously views access to Persian Gulf oil as "vital to US and global security," little evidence exists that it has sought to steal this oil.[68] For instance, it did not seize Iraqi oil fields or appropriate the proceeds from oil sales. However, access to oil reserves may very well have been one motivating factor for the invasion of Iraq.[69]

First, the September 11 attacks created concerns about Saudi stability. Some of these concerns were rational and some were not, but they all influenced elite and general public opinion in the United States. The fact that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers came from Saudi Arabia raised questions about whether hatred for the United States was more endemic in the kingdom than previously believed. It also raised the question of whether they attacked the United States in order to create a schism in US-Saudi relations and thus undermine the legitimacy of the Saudi regime, which may have been their primary target.

Some were concerned that elements in the Saudi regime actually supported the terrorists, suggesting the existence of a radical element within the royal family itself. Others believed that the regime had turned a blind eye to the terrorists because the religious establishment in the country made it politically difficult to confront them. If any of these explanations were credible, the future of US-Saudi relations was potentially in jeopardy.

It made sense to secure Iraq's vast oil resources if Saudi Arabia was becoming unstable. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein could put Iraq's oil production in friendlier hands, and this would give the West greater ability to maintain the flow of oil in the event of political or security problems in Saudi Arabia. Even if the Saudi regime was stable, US-Saudi tensions could mount over time, thus making Iraq more important to diversifying oil supplies.

Second, regime change could allow for higher Iraqi oil production. Iraq is believed to have 112.5 billion barrels of known reserves, which places it second only to Saudi Arabia's 262 billion (approximately 25 percent of the world's proven oil reserves). Iraq's potential could have been viewed as enormous precisely because it has been hamstrung over the past twenty-five years. The Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988, the 1991 Gulf War, subsequent UN sanctions, periodic American military attacks, and Saddam's own mismanagement and corruption further curtailed Iraq's potential and left its oil infrastructure in disarray.

Iraq's various conflicts with the UN resulted in a drop in oil production from an average of 2.0–2.6 million barrels per day (mb/d) from 1999 to 2001, due to sanctions delineated under UN Resolution 986. Production hit a high of 2.6 mb/d in 2000 (equal to 3.4 percent of world supply) and dropped to 1.7 mb/d by August–September 2002.[70] Ending Saddam's regime could have been viewed as a way to liberate Iraq's production.

Third, toppling Iraq's regime could have ended Iraq's threat to regional oil fields, at least in the near term. After all, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait had demonstrated that Saddam Hussein might be inclined once again to invade Kuwait or even Saudi Arabia.[71] This was increasingly likely as international pressure and the UN sanctions began to wane, leaving Saddam greater room to maneuver in the region.[72]

These three factors may well have contributed to the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq. Administration officials could not have underestimated potential problems with Saudi Arabia and the importance of oil to the American and global economy. Nor could they overlook the fact that Persian Gulf oil would only become more important as other sources of oil around the world began to peak and then dry up. Just how important the oil factor was as a national security concern in the administration's decision-making process, compared to other motivations, is unclear and hard to assess.

Oil, Halliburton, and American Oil Companies

Although national security may have motivated an interest in Iraqi oil, another potential explanation for invading Iraq is that Cheney, and his contacts in the oil world, could have benefited from large oil contracts after Iraq was liberated by American forces. With America dominating or influencing Iraq, the United States could more effectively compete for such contracts with countries such as France, Russia, and China, who already had a foothold in the region. Not only could the United States get a bigger piece of the pie, but the size of the pie itself would expand because Iraq could produce far more oil with Saddam gone, UN sanctions lifted, and foreign investment revitalizing Iraq's oil sector.

This view of American motivation for going to war smacked of deep cynicism and may have been promoted by the administration's detractors in order to embarrass top administration officials. But Cheney's previous role as CEO of Halliburton, plus

President Bush's own oil background, tend to reinforce this viewpoint.[73] The Bush administration's Energy Task Force, which was headed by Cheney, presented a draft report in April 2001 that stated, among other things, that the United States should reconsider sanctions against Iran, Iraq, and Libya, because they prohibited US oil companies from doing business in "some of the most important existing and prospective petroleum-producing countries in the world."[74] Moreover, immediately prior to the invasion of Iraq in early 2003, Halliburton's subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown & Root, received a multibillion-dollar contract from the Defense Department to repair oil fields and import consumer fuels in Iraq.[75]

Would Cheney have risked a national and global scandal to help a company for which he no longer worked, even though he had to know that the contract would be criticized? Although he still had Halliburton stock, would he risk a high-profile scandal for money?

Although mining Iraq's energy resources could benefit companies like Halliburton that support the infrastructure for oil production, it would not necessarily help oil producers. As more oil flowed from Iraq, the price of oil would likely decrease based on simple supply/demand dynamics. Big oil companies could benefit only if the profits from additional contracts in Iraq outweighed the losses they would face from lower oil prices. Nonetheless, the factor of domestic oil and oil services companies benefiting from regime change in Iraq should be considered.

Father and Son: Personal Reasons

Was President Bush's decision to go to war in Iraq influenced by the fact that his father evicted Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1991 but left him in power? In this scenario, Bush Jr. invaded Iraq to finish the job that Bush Sr. started. As Richard Haass, a central figure and close to the key decision makers in both the 1990–1991 and 2003 crises, put it, Bush Jr. "may have sought to accomplish what his father did not."[76] He may have sought to shore up his father's legacy by finishing off a dictator who proved to be more resilient than his father and many others anticipated. Saddam's longevity embarrassed Bush Sr., not just because he survived the 1991 war when many thought he would fall, but because he continued to be perceived as a major threat, especially after September 11. Many people began to ask why the United States did not eliminate him in 1991, when it had the chance to do so. Thus if Bush Jr. invaded Iraq, he could benefit his father's legacy by removing the threat and proving that Saddam actually did have WMD and connections to terrorists. History would surely blame Bush Sr. if terrorists linked to Iraq bombed New York in 2015. Bush Jr. could make sure that never happened by taking matters into his own hands.

Then too, Bush Jr. may have sought to avenge Saddam's effort to assassinate his father during a 1993 visit to Kuwait. He did say that Saddam Hussein was "a guy that tried to kill my dad," suggesting an overt hostility toward the dictator.[77] Loyalty runs strong in the Bush family and Bush Jr. acted as an enforcer of loyalty in his father's administration, all of which suggests that a personal motive may have influenced President Bush's decision to overthrow Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Perhaps Bush Jr. sought to mark out his own independent course as a determined leader despite his reputation as a follower, reacting to widespread criticism that it was actually Dick Cheney, one of Bush Sr.'s closest advisers, who ran the administration. This criticism could not have been lost on Bush Jr. and certainly not on his advisers, who may have thought a war would establish his credentials as a strong leader. Interestingly, when asked by Bob Woodward whether he had consulted with his father before making the decision to invade Iraq, Bush Jr. asserted, "There is a higher Father that I appeal to," dismissing his father's role in rather unambiguous terms.[78]

Moreover, Brent Scowcroft, his father's influential national security adviser and close friend, argued in the *Wall Street Journal* against the Iraq invasion, asserting that containment was working well and warning that an invasion would impede the war on terrorism and destabilize the region.[79] Scowcroft's remarks may have reflected the views of Bush Sr., who seemed unhappy with his son's decision to go to war and had strongly opposed invading Baghdad in 1991. In any case, ignoring the advice of his father's key adviser, and possibly that of his father, suggests that he was determined to chart his own course.

Bush, God, and Religion

If Bush's father played a limited role in shaping his decisions, this was not the case for God Almighty. President Bush raised—significantly more than most presidents—the issue of religion and his relationship with God in his speeches. From his assertion on September 12, 2001, that he was in the "Lord's hands,"[80] to his constant rhetoric about the forces of good and evil, to his frequent references to the war on terrorism as a crusade,[81] Bush was prone to a religious interpretation of events.[82] His notion of "crusade" was quite different from that of most Muslims: he saw it as an effort to confront evil terrorists and those who supported them, whereas Muslims tended to interpret it in terms of their difficult historical experience with the brutal Christian Crusades.[83]

In the spring of 2004 Bush referred several times to his belief that a higher source was guiding his actions. Historically, the United States had promoted the liberal tradition as a transnational set of ideas and largely kept religion out of politics. Indeed, it was an area in which the United States differed fundamentally from Islamist states. President Bush was not deviating significantly from that tradition, however, nor did the president speak for all Americans or administration officials. Nevertheless, his words were enough to raise questions in the Muslim world about a Judeo-Christian showdown with Islam. The fact that President Bush embraced Israel's leader, Ariel Sharon, added to this perception, because their close relationship fed speculation about a Zionist-Crusader conspiracy.

Seemingly Bush would be heavily criticized for his copious religious references, and to some extent he was. Yet even during the presidential election, the campaign of Senator John Kerry veered away from open criticism. Bush's religious imagery seemed to have struck a chord not only among Christian conservatives and evangelicals, who had a biblical interpretation of world events, but also among Americans who held negative views of Muslims even prior to 9/11.

Possibly Bush saw Iraq through the prism of religion. The United States was a God-fearing Christian nation, and Iraq was fit for transformation. Of course, Iraq could not be Christianized, but the messianic impulse may have been part of what bolstered Bush's determination, an impulse that meshed well with his brand of American exceptionalism.

The Military-Industrial Complex

Factors particular to President Bush may have influenced the drive to war in Iraq. However, some observers, especially those inclined toward conspiracy theories, might say that the so-called military-industrial complex, whose notorious power and influence President Eisenhower warned Americans about, also had a role in the decision to go to war in Iraq. According to some thinkers, this complex of corporate and military organizations has a vested interest in going to war—high-profit military contracts, expanded military research budgets, and influence.

Invading Iraq could benefit the military-industrial complex. The Defense Department could gain influence and prestige if the armed forces performed well, and the military might stave off budget cuts and base closings and gain support for new weapons programs.

The Israel Lobby

Some speculate that the Israel lobby in Washington was connected to the American decision to invade Iraq.[84] This explanation seems unlikely. It is very hard to make a connection between the lobby and decision making in the Bush White House. That decision was made by a very few people—essentially Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld. The decision-making team, as far as we know, also had little input from thinkers outside government or even from its own intelligence community.

Moreover, the decision to invade can be traced to the factors discussed in this chapter that were immediate issues—the fear in the post-9/11 period of WMD in the hands of a dictator who had used WMD on his own people and had attacked Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990. Such issues likely predominated, making other factors less salient.

CONCLUSION

The Iraq war was launched in March 2003, but US-Iraqi tensions had been building throughout the 1990s. Although the 1991 war had severely weakened Iraq, the wily dictator from Tikrit not only failed to cooperate with UN inspectors as mandated by UNSC Resolution 687 but acted as if he had WMD, which he evidently lacked. He may have thought that this pretense would send a signal to his real and imagined adversaries at both the domestic and international level that he was strong, that he could deter their attacks, even punish them with retaliation if need be. Yet by acting as if he had WMD, he constructed himself as the very threat that the administration of George W. Bush wanted to check and then eliminate after the 9/11 attacks. In this sense, Saddam was once again acting as his own worst enemy.

The United States appears to have invaded Iraq chiefly because it feared WMD in the hands of a dictator and assumed the worst about Saddam's connections to terrorists. These concerns were significantly heightened and reframed by 9/11. That tectonic event altered the prism through which Bush administration officials saw the world, particularly the potential threat posed by Iraq. This helps to explain why the United States saw Iraq so differently than did so many other countries around the world.

American fears were exacerbated by poor intelligence, which, viewed through the 9/11 prism, took on new meaning. Most likely, this intelligence was used selectively by some officials to justify a war that the administration thought was necessary. Although 9/11 created a potential strategic rationale for going to war against Iraq, it also allowed the administration to garner public support for war. That had been lacking even after the United States made regime change in Iraq its official policy in 1998.

By eliminating Saddam's regime and refashioning Iraq, the administration could also advance democratization in the Middle East. If terrorists were hatched partly because they lived in repressive societies, democratic "shock therapy" to the region, as romantic as it sounded, might ameliorate this problem. At the same time, the United States could help secure Iraq as a hedge against post-9/11 instability in oil-rich Saudi Arabia.

Domestic and personal motivations for war cannot be ruled out, but they do not appear to be as important as the primary factors. After all, they had not generated war earlier, in the absence of the critical factors outlined above.

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CHAPTER 15

WHAT WENT WRONG IN IRAQ?

Ali R. Abootalebi

The George W. Bush administration launched its invasion of Iraq in 2003 confident that American forces would liberate Iraq and would be met with welcoming crowds of Iraqis throwing flowers and blowing kisses. This euphoric entrance into Baghdad was to be followed, it was hoped, by a quick transition to a liberal secular democracy, if possible through the election of an American-friendly government composed principally of former exiles, in particular that of Ahmed Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress (INC). With the impressive American military victory in Afghanistan and the creation of the friendly Karzai government in Kabul only a year earlier, it seemed the template for regime change had already been established. However, nearly fifteen years after the war started, the political situation in Iraq remains highly unstable, characterized by high levels of sectarianism, political paralysis, and direct threats to the territorial integrity of the regime. In 2014, the Islamic State (ISIS), which had its roots in the chaotic aftermath of the invasion, seized large portions of Iraqi territory, and Baghdad and its military, at least in the short run, proved impotent to stop it.

The Bush administration not only failed to achieve its stated policy objectives in Iraq but actually damaged its long-term policy goals in the Middle East region and reduced the likelihood of its victory in the war on terror. Rather than establishing a stable democracy with a viable working economy, the invasion of Iraq instead brought the country to the brink of sectarian civil war, intensified sectarian divisions in the Iraqi political system, undermined regional and international public support for US foreign policy, and seriously weakened the US military.

For these reasons, the Iraq invasion of 2003 was a strategic mistake for the United States. It was the result of a combination of factors—principally the neoconservative imperial hubris that had infected the Bush administration after September 11, 2001, and inadequate knowledge of Iraqi society and culture among key decision makers. This latter factor also played a role in the many tactical errors made by US personnel in the planning stages of the invasion and in its immediate aftermath—all of which simply compounded the strategic mistake made in the decision to go to war. These include (but are not limited to) the decision to invade with a light force, the lack of postwar planning, the decision to quickly disband the Iraqi military, and the absence of comprehensive communication with the Shi'a community and its leadership. This chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of why the US invasion of Iraq was a strategic mistake and accounts for the many tactical errors that were made in its implementation.

THE IRAQ WAR AS A STRATEGIC MISTAKE

The Shortsighted Neoconservative Vision

The strategic mistake of going to war with Iraq resulted from President Bush's miscalculation that the transition to stability and democracy in the aftermath of the invasion would be relatively easy. That the president was so misled was the direct result of a number of influential policy advisers, academics, and decision makers, many of whom adhere to the vision of American hegemony known as neoconservatism. Though the roots of this movement date back several decades, the neoconservative movement achieved unprecedented publicity and power through the so-called Project for a New American Century and the influence its members gained within the Bush administration.

Individuals in positions of influence who have been part of this neoconservative movement since 2000 include former vice president Dick Cheney; former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld; former deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz; former undersecretary of defense for policy Douglas Feith; Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis Libby; Zalmay Khalilzad (later US ambassador to Iraq); Elliot Abrams, special assistant to the president and senior director for Near East and North African affairs from 2002 to 2005; and Richard Perle, chairman, from 2001 to 2003, of the Defense Policy Advisory Board.

The neoconservative push to invade Iraq was driven by a number of policy objectives. First, "neocons" desired to export secular democracy and free market capitalism to Iraq and the wider Middle East. Transforming Iraq into a democracy would lessen the threat it posed to its neighbors, thus allowing for the redeployment of US troops from Saudi Arabia, where their presence near Islam's holiest sites continued to incite Muslim anger. Second, replacing the Saddam regime with a US-friendly government would end its support for Islamic terrorists fighting Israel. Third, such a government would also aid the US goal of securing oil and gas pipelines from the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. And finally, an invasion would end a twelve-year policy of economic sanctions and no-fly zones that were continuing to make the United States look ineffectual and weak. All of this could be achieved, they believed, through a rapid military campaign and the replacement of the Ba'thist regime with a mostly secular government composed principally of friendly exiled Iraqis.

Unable to justify the intervention on these policy objectives alone, the Bush administration appeared to fabricate a threat from Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and to exaggerate the connections between the Saddam regime and international terrorism. The "Downing Street memo," as first reported on May 1, 2005, by the *Sunday Times* of London, revealed that British prime minister Tony Blair was told by the head of Britain's MI6 intelligence service, Sir Richard Dearlove, that in 2002 the Bush administration was selectively choosing evidence that supported its case for going to war and ignoring anything to the contrary.[1]

James Risen of the *New York Times* provided vital additional background to the Downing Street memo in his book *State of War.* Risen provides evidence, albeit mostly from unnamed sources, on everything from illegal domestic wiretapping, to a botched plan to give Iran flawed blueprints for a nuclear-weapon triggering device, to the CIA's desperate attempt to recruit American citizens of Iraqi background to collect intelligence and evidence supporting the Bush administration's claims that Iraq had reconstituted its WMD program after 1998, when the UN arms inspectors had certified their total destruction. Risen tells, for example, of the CIA's efforts to collect evidence of Iraq's WMD program by recruiting a middle-aged Iraqi American mother from Cleveland to travel to Iraq and become a spy. But, like dozens of others who were recruited for such missions, she came back with the news that Hussein had been forced to abandon these efforts. Yet CIA director George Tenet did not circulate this information to policymakers, and the eager Tenet instead famously declared to Bush that the case against Hussein was a "slam dunk."[2]

Iraq's WMD program was in fact limited to mainly laboratory experimentation with chemical and biological substances, its stockpile of weapons having long been destroyed. Since the first Gulf War the UN inspection teams had successfully discovered and supervised the destruction of 90 percent of these weapons, and the regime itself disposed of its stockpiles for fear of potential reprisals. The evidence on Iraq's nuclear activities also pointed to a rudimentary program that never really recovered after the Israeli destruction of the Osirak nuclear plant in 1981. In October 2004, the head of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), Charles Duelfer, announced that the group had found no evidence that Iraq had produced and stockpiled any WMD since 1991, when UN sanctions were imposed.[3]

Misreading Iraqi Society and Culture

The neoconservative vision failed to take account of Iraqi culture and society and underestimated the influence of Iran. The ethnic (Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen), religious (Shi'a, Sunni), and tribal divisions in Iraq were bound to become a source of instability once the repressive central government was toppled. Islam is the religion of 97 percent of the population, divided between Shi'a (60–65 percent) and Sunni Islam (32–37 percent); Christians and other minorities constitute the rest. The Arab-Kurd divide in Iraq overlaps the Sunni-Shi'a divide, as the 15–20 percent Kurdish population overwhelmingly follows Sunni Islam.[4] The Shi'a clerical leadership continues to emphasize Iraq's Islamic character instead of ethnic and class divisions. While the future of ethnic relations remains uncertain, especially in the face of Kurdish historical aspirations for independence, it is the goal of the Shi'a and Sunni clerical leadership in Iraq and in neighboring Iran to promote Iraqi unity along with its Islamic identity. Indeed, given the current situation in Iraq, Islam is the only common denominator among the four main rival ethnic groups (including the small minority of Turkmen) capable of keeping Iraq unified.

Secular democracy can be a very attractive solution for observers and policymakers from outside the region, as it evidently was to the Bush administration. But how can secular democracy take hold almost overnight in a society that has had entrenched religious institutions for fourteen hundred years? The experimentation with modernization elsewhere in the Middle East has usually resulted in weak societies and strong states, where power elites have continued to rule through political rhetoric and parochial sources of legitimization, including religion, personal charisma, and political repression and/or cooptation.[5] The rise of political Islam and its relative success in Iran in the mobilization and redirection of socioeconomic resources has raised hopes among sectors of the populace in Iraq and Muslims elsewhere. It is unlikely that a majority of Iraqis will abandon what is so familiar and dear—Islam—for an unknown imported ideology supported by the American and British occupiers and their cohorts among Iraq's secular elites.

The return of Islam to the center stage of politics and society in the Middle East is not surprising. It need not be seen as a threatening force against political stability and democracy in the region. The interplay between Islam and politics in Iraq today is over the question of "effective governance," not whether Islam is trying to totally dominate politics or to use the democratic process to destroy democracy for the sake of an Islamic theocracy. The question really should be whether political Islam can govern and whether Islam and democracy can coexist within particular Muslim (e.g., Iraqi) sociopolitical, economic, and cultural milieus. If this dilemma is not resolved, US fears about political Islam will seriously damage its interests in Iraq and in the Middle East in general.

Undermining the War on Terror

The resistance of the ex-Ba'thists, jihadists, and nationalists to the occupation, though motivated by different agendas, proved lethal. The jihadists, inspired by al-Qa'ida and Salafi and Wahhabi ideologies, have considered Iraq a potential base for continuing their jihad against the crusading West and their Iraqi allies. The Iraqi nationalists and ex-Ba'thists, on the other hand, saw their fight against occupation as a matter of Iraqi pride and lost socioeconomic resources and prestige. The insurgency used every means available in attacks on coalition forces and Iraqi government forces with the objective of either regaining lost power (the primary motivation of the ex-Ba'thists) or setting up a new Islamic base to counter the US presence in Iraq and its support of "corrupt" regimes in the Arab world (the goal of the jihadists).

The post-9/11 terrorist attacks on American forces in Iraq revealed that al-Qa'ida is a multinational network of dedicated radical militants from all over the Muslim world, committed to an anti-Western, especially anti-American, campaign. The ultimate goal of al-Qa'ida is the eradication of Western influence and control over Muslim countries, especially the oil-rich Middle East. But equally important to al-Qa'ida operatives is the overthrow of "corrupt" governments in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Muslim world that with the support of the West, have abandoned the will of Allah—the establishment of just and viable Islamic governments. As the fundamental reasons behind his strong anti-American stance, Osama bin Laden cited US support for the "illegitimate" state of Israel in its conflict with the conquered Palestinians, the US military presence in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states and US support for their corrupt regimes, and the long-standing US sanctions against innocent Iraqi people. One observer has succinctly summarized the challenge to American foreign policy in the Middle East:

> Two groups have come under examination in the "why do they hate us?" debate that has unfolded since September 11, 2001. One comprises the perpetrators of violence and terrorism—the Osama bin Ladens, the Mohammad Attas, and some suicide bombers. They are fanatics in every sense of the word. Their interpretations of politics and Islam are so extreme that they disparage the great majority of Muslim Middle Easterners as "unbelievers." They are not going to be deterred by debate, compromise, sanctions, or even the threat of death. The challenge they pose to the United States is a security issue, a matter to be dealt with through careful police work and military action. America's resources are adequate for dealing with this threat. The vastly larger group of Muslim Middle Easterners who express anger toward the United States and evince some sympathy for bin Laden pose a far more serious challenge. This group's members are afflicted by middle-class frustrations, governed by political systems that give them no voice, and burdened by economies that offer them few opportunities. They are witnessing a conflict over land and sacred places in which they perceive the United States as applying two standards of equity and two standards of measuring violence, each in favor of Israel. That resulting frustration and anger leads to expressions of sympathy for those who resort to violence against the United States.[6]

The Bush administration and its supporters claimed that Iraq had become a graveyard for militant jihadists and therefore the United States had become safer since the battleground had moved away from the homeland. However, it has become clear from various assessments by Israeli, British, and American sources that the invasion of Iraq created a new generation of Islamic jihadists who will continue to pose a serious threat to the United States for years to come. For example, the appearance of many self-starter terrorists, like the ones responsible for the attack on Madrid's public transportation system in 2004 and London's in 2005, and the Iraqi jihadist movement, including groups like Ansar al-Sunna and the Islamic Army of Iraq, negate the claim of a jihadist retreat in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion.

Iraqi chaos also created the environment for the rise of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who broke off from al-Qa'ida with a deliberate strategy of inflaming sectarian and communal violence. In October 2004, al-Zarqawi declared himself the "emir" of al-Qa'ida in Iraq. His followers broke from al-Qa'ida and renamed their group the Islamic State of Iraq in late 2006, about four months after al-Zarqawi was killed by a targeted American airstrike.[7] This, along with the ineptitude of the Shi'a-dominated government in Baghdad and the foreign occupation, ensured the rise of extreme ideologies and facilitated the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). ISIS has thrived on ultraconservatism and sectarian killings in the name of its "true" version of Islam ever since.

In addition to provoking a backlash, the war in Iraq also drew resources away from other fronts in the US war on terror. The costs of the war in Iraq were orders of magnitude higher than the $100–200 billion estimates made at the beginning of the conflict. The Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University estimated in 2011 that the war had cost $1.7 trillion, with an additional $490 billion in benefits owed to war veterans, expenses that could grow to more than $6 trillion over the next four decades, counting interest. The report also indicates that the $212 billion reconstruction effort in Iraq was largely a failure, with most of that money spent on security or lost to waste and fraud.[8] As pertaining to the human cost of the war, the war has killed at least 134,000 Iraqi civilians and may have contributed to the deaths of as many as four times that number. By the end of 2011, when nearly all forces were removed from Iraq, 4,485 American and 4,803 coalition troops were dead in the country.[9]

Further troubling for US interests is a widespread belief among Iraqis that the United States is in Iraq not for the sake of their "liberation" but for their oil wealth and that the US military will remain in Iraq indefinitely. A 2006 survey of Iraqi attitudes toward Americans indicated that "large majorities of Iraqis believe that the United States has no intention of ever withdrawing all its military forces from their country and that Washington's reconstruction efforts have been incompetent at best: Eighty percent of respondents said they believe the US intends to maintain permanent military bases in Iraq, including 79 percent of Shi'a Arabs, 92 percent of Sunnis, and two-thirds of Kurds, some of whose leaders have quietly suggested that Washington would be welcome to establish bases in Kurdistan in northern Iraq."[10]

Terrorism experts Peter Bergen and Alec Reynolds suggested in 2005 that the war in Iraq "will generate a ferocious blowback of its own, which—as a classified CIA assessment predicts—could be longer and more powerful than that from Afghanistan in the 1990s and beyond."[11] This is aside from the drastically declining popularity of the United States in the Arab and Muslim world, as indicated by various polls taken by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Zogby, and CNN/Gallup.

COMPOUNDING THE STRATEGIC MISTAKE: TACTICAL ERRORS IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Too Few Ground Troops

Soon after the initial US and UK launch of "shock and awe" and the ground invasion on March 20, 2003, it became clear that an inadequate number of troops had been committed to the operation. When Baghdad fell in sixteen days, on April 5, it was attributed to American military strategy and technological superiority. Some elements of the Iraqi army put up stiff resistance in places like Nasariyah, but the scale of the resistance was far smaller than the expected house-to-house battle in Iraqi cities. The statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdos Square came down on April 9, but the potent and deadly American military lacked the numbers to both occupy and control vast Iraqi territories. According to General Tommy Franks, who led the attack on Iraq, the United States had sufficient combat forces in Iraq but did not initially have enough civil affairs, military police, and other units needed to establish order after major combat was over; the issue was not the level of forces but their composition. Reporting on General Franks's assessment, Michael Gordon of the *New York Times* asserted: "This was partly a result of difficulties in getting all of the Central Command's force requests approved quickly at the Pentagon. He also admitted that delays in obtaining funds from Congress for reconstruction efforts and the decision of many foreign governments not to send troops had contributed to the continuing turmoil in Iraq."[12] General Franks stopped short of criticizing his boss, Donald Rumsfeld, but by then the gulf between the Pentagon and the commanders on the ground on military strategy was increasingly apparent.

Others have reached similar conclusions. The generals on the ground understood what a disaster they were creating in the race to reach Baghdad, which left in its wake an entire country full of places where Saddam Hussein's loyalists could regroup and prepare to carry on a permanent war. In *Cobra II,* Michael Gordon and General Bernard Trainor underscore that the generals in the field were overruled by directives from Washington. They argue that in addition to the actual war, there was an ongoing war between US field commanders, their own senior commander (General Tommy Franks, the head of Central Command), and civilian leaders in Washington. Gordon and Trainor contend that the US military's quick victory came despite the strategic miscalculations of senior civilian and military leaders and that the Bush team's misjudgments made the situation in Iraq far worse than it otherwise would have been.[13] Michael Gordon observed in late 2004:

> Looking back at that crucial time, officers, administration officials, and others provided an intimate and detailed account of how the postwar situation went awry. Civilian administrators of the Iraqi occupation raised concerns about plans to reduce American forces; intelligence agencies left American forces unprepared for the furious battles they encountered in Iraq's southern cities and did not emphasize the risks of a postwar

insurgency. And senior American generals and civilians were at odds over plans to build a new Iraqi army, which was needed to impose order.[14]

Insufficient Planning

On April 14, 2003, the Pentagon declared an end to major combat operations after US forces took control of Tikrit in northern Iraq. The question no one was asking, however, was, What happened to the Iraqi army? The presumption seemed to be that the Iraqi army, facing certain destruction, had simply dissolved. But the Iraqi army had proven itself a loyal army with strong commitments to the Ba'thist ideology and the rule of the privileged Sunni Arabs. Speculations about Saddam's army making a grand stand in a battle of cities did not materialize, since the Iraqi army had learned the lessons of the first Persian Gulf war in 1991 on how deadly a direct confrontation with US forces can be. The Pentagon, however, had failed to anticipate and prepare for an unconventional guerrilla war. It should not have come as a surprise to the war planners that the core of the Iraqi army, the Republican Guards, would fight the invasion on its own terms. In the 1991 war, the Iraqi army sacrificed thousands of its poorly trained and equipped peasant army to slow down the American liberation of Kuwait and the occupation of southern Iraq, while the elite Republican Guards suppressed the Shi'a and Kurdish rebellion and ensured the regime's survival. In October 2004 Condoleezza Rice put the blame for the insurgency primarily "on the fact that many Iraqi forces fled during the American push to Baghdad, only to fight another day."[15]

When Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III issued his decrees on May 16 and 23, 2003, disestablishing the Ba'th Party and disbanding Iraqi armed forces, he was fueling the resistance with additional incentives for a prolonged guerrilla resistance to the occupation. The Ba'thists had ruled over Iraq since 1968, with strong ties to tribal leaders and an iron fist policy in suppressing Shi'a and Kurdish opposition. The Iraqi regime had survived eight years of a disastrous war with Iran and the humiliation of the first Persian Gulf War and then survived and even thrived under the United Nations sanctions regime throughout the 1990s. The declaration of these decrees could not undo a woven network of connections and privileges in Iraqi civil-military relations, and Paul Bremer should have known that. The hard core of the loyal Republican Guards had prepared to disband itself on the eve of the war, but only to engage in a prolonged guerrilla fight later. The tactics and skills used by the insurgents in Iraq are testimony to the Guards' central involvement in the insurgency.

The chaos that fell on Baghdad after the fall of the regime exposed how ill-prepared the US forces were for dealing with the postconflict situation. The looting of Baghdad began almost immediately after coalition troops arrived in Baghdad. While the Baghdad National Museum was being looted, US troops were busy protecting the oil ministry. The poorly protected munitions depots were looted, and nearly all government services came to a halt. The absence of police protection and the prolonged disruptions in electric, water, sewage, and other basic services contributed to the transformation of the initial low-intensity conflict into a much deadlier form of insurgency. On July 16, 2003, General John Abizaid called the increasing attacks on coalition troops a "guerrilla-type campaign," speculating that troops might need to be deployed for up to one year. The August 19, 2003, bombing of the UN's Baghdad office, killing UN representative Sergio Vieira de Mello and twenty-one others, and the August 29 bombing in Najaf that killed eighty-three people, including the leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI, later renamed Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq or Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, ISCI or SIIC), Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, were devastating blows to the United States and other coalition members as the new protectors of the Iraqi people. By then, the number of US combat deaths had reached 117, and more had died since the declared end of combat operations than had died during the initial combat.

In the first eight months after the invasion, the Bremer administration tried to recover international support for the coalition occupation of Iraq and legitimate the coalition troop presence. The creation of the twenty-five-member Iraqi Governing Council on July 13, 2003, and its August 14 UN Security Council approval were intended to mend earlier splits in the UN Security Council that positioned the United States and Great Britain on one side and France (and Germany) and, to a lesser degree, China and the Russian Federation on the other. Later, on November 15, Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) signed an agreement to draft an interim constitution by February 28, 2004, and to transfer power by July 1, 2004. In the meantime, Bremer and the US military were caught by surprise as insurgents stepped up their deadly attacks and the Shi'a religious leadership began to flex its muscle. The number of US soldiers killed in Iraq reached five hundred on January 17, 2004, and soon the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani rejected the US proposal for indirect, caucus-style elections. Iraq's Shi'a leadership was not a part of the "grand coalition" of Iraqi exiles who were slated to govern postinvasion Iraq.

The insurgency was also fueled by ordinary Iraqis who joined the cause because of their loss of livelihood or because of humiliation suffered at the hands of the Americans. The injection of non-Iraqi foreign fighters and al-Qa'ida jihadists into the Iraqi theater served to strengthen the existing resistance, since the war with the coalition forces was already expected to be a long-term conflict.

Underestimating the Shi'a Factor in Both Iraq and Iran

Although Ahmad Chalabi and the mainly secular members of the Iraq National Congress (INC) had the attention and support of neoconservatives in Washington, a larger and more popular group of Iraqi oppositionists had spent years organizing in Iran, building the foundation of a future Islamic Iraq. The SCIRI and Hizb al-Da'wah had long established political and theological links between the seminaries in Qom (Iran) and al-Najaf (Iraq), with a clear vision that Iraq would one day become an Islamic republic. Given the traditional ties between the Shi'a leadership in Iran and the Shi'a leadership in Iraq, the Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's stature in both the Shi'a and Sunni communities, and the suffering of Iraqi people under the secular Ba'thist regime, the clerics in Iraq were inevitably going to rise to the center stage of Iraqi politics. However, the United States made no serious contacts with the Shi'a leadership in Iraq prior to, or in the initial phase of, the invasion, and Jay Garner and Paul Bremer seemed oblivious to the gathering Shi'a power. Clearly the Shi'a leadership would not have agreed then, nor would it agree in the future, to submit to secular politics and an extended US military presence in Iraq. Nevertheless, the exclusion of prominent indigenous and exiled Shi'a clerics from plans for the future of Iraq certainly added to the mistrust of US intentions.

The clash between US forces and the militia loyal to the fiery and popular Shi'a leader Moqtada al-Sadr on April 4, 2004, was testimony not so much to the divisions within the Shi'a clerical leadership but to their preferred strategies. Despite the CPA's issuing an arrest warrant for al-Sadr, his Mahdi Army fought US forces for seven weeks until the truce agreement on May 27. The truce was really the product of al-Sistani's call for al-Sadr to stop fighting in order to prevent a premature popular Shi'a rebellion, at a time when the mainly Sunni and jihadist resistance to the coalition forces meant accepting, for the present, US meddling in Iraqi affairs. Ayatollah al-Sistani may adhere to the quietist school of Shi'a Islam—which calls for clerics to avoid direct involvement in politics—but his vision for the future of Iraq parallels that of his Shi'a counterparts in Iraq and Iran who oppose secular political governance and social relations. The Shi'a clerical leadership understands that in light of Sunni Arab and Kurdish opposition to a Shi'a-dominated state, it must enlist the cooperation of non-Shi'a sectors of the Iraqi population. Thus the key to its political success is the utilization of both cooperation (al-Sistani) and resistance (al-Sadr) to maintain its leverage. However, the Bush administration was oblivious to the networking power of the religious *hawzehs*—religious seminaries—in Iraq and Iran. There are millions of dedicated supporters among Shi'a and Sunni Islamic movements who, having rejected Ba'thism and despising foreign military occupation, continue to strive for an Islamic Iraq.

The United States, from the beginning, had decided to support secular forces in Iraq in both exile and indigenous communities. The Shi'a clerical power, including open clashes with the Mahdi Army in Kufa, Karbala, Najaf, al-Kut, and Sadr City, was considered to be a direct challenge to US plans in Iraq. The creation of Iraq's interim administration under Ghazi al-Yawar as president and Ayad Allawi as prime minister was to promote a functional secular government to deal with Iraqis' daily problems. The success of the Allawi administration therefore depended on the position of secular forces in Iraq. However, the revelation of physical and sexual abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib on April 23, the persistent insurgent attacks on Iraqis and coalition forces, including the beheading of an American freelance contractor, Nick Berg, shown in an online video on May 11, and the deterioration of living conditions in Iraq continued to undermine the leadership of the US-supported interim administration. It should have come as no surprise when Ayad Allawi's Iraqi National List captured only a small percentage of the vote in the December 12, 2005, parliamentary election.

The US administration's ignorance concerning the power of the Shi'a clerics and the unpopularity of the US-backed Iraqi politicians were reflected in a report. Alastair Crooke and Mark Perry, the codirectors of Conflicts Forum, a London-based group dedicated to providing an opening to political Islam, observed that "seventy-two hours before the Iraqi people voted on a new parliament, on December 12, 2005, we were told by a senior US administration official that 'detailed data received by the White House' pointed to a 'decisive win' for Ayad Allawi's Iraqi National List." Allawi's victory would turn the tables on the insurgents, this official said gleefully. "Sectarianism will be the big loser." Allawi's prospective triumph was trumpeted repeatedly over the next two days by US news networks quoting administration officials. Weeks later, after the results of the election became known, it was clear that the White House had overestimated Allawi's popularity. His party received just over 5 percent of the vote.[16]

What emerged by 2005 as a powerful alliance of Shi'a groups, the United Iraqi Alliance, was the natural outcome of the changed political environment in Iraq in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ba'thist regime. Despite their differences in leadership and organization, the leading Shi'a parties in the alliance, SCIRI and al-Da'wah, share aspirations for a religiously oriented Iraq, in close cooperation with their counterparts in Iran. It is no secret that leading Shi'a clerics and networks in Iraq and Iran (as well as in Lebanon) have overlapping and complementary personal and religious ties and experiences.[17] There are prominent Shi'a clerics with their feet in both countries' main religious seminaries in al-Najaf and Qom. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, for example, was born in Iran but is the leading religious figure in Iraq. The late Grand Ayatollah Abul-Qassim Khoei was born in Iran in 1899 but moved to Iraq at age thirteen and took residence in the holy city of Najaf. Ayatollah Sayed Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim fled to Iran in 1980 and, along with Iranian Ayatollah Modarresi, cofounded SCIRI. The famous al-Sadr family also has had a long history of prominent Shi'a clerical leadership in Iraq and Lebanon. The late Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, who was born in al-Kadhimya, Iraq, and worked with Sayed Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim in forming the Islamic movement in Iraq, is the father-in-law of Moqtada al-Sadr and the cousin of both Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr and Lebanon's Imam Musa al-Sadr. After leading the Mahdi Army in the mid-2000s, Moqtada al-Sadr continued studying in a Qom seminary and returned to Iraq in 2013 as an ayatollah and a serious contender in Iraqi religious and political arena.[18] The Bush administration's wishful thinking that Iraq would become a secular democracy was, in sum, an act of self-deception.

Further endangering American goals in Iraq and Afghanistan are Iranian leaders' perceptions and policies. Iran is frequently cited as the biggest beneficiary of America's war on terrorism due to the removal of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam in Iraq. But observers of the region held differing opinions on how the situation in Iraq was likely to impact Iranian policy. Some argued that there was no unitary Iranian approach when it came to Iraq. Michael Eisenstadt, director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's military and security studies program, argued that "there are debates in Tehran that fall in along ideological as well as pragmatic fault lines." In one hoped-for scenario, Iran would seek a US withdrawal from Iraq in the long run, but a "manageable" state of conflict would be in their short-term geostrategic interests, since this would keep the United States tied down in Iraq and thus less able to concentrate on countering Iran. The US military preoccupation in Iraq would therefore work to Iran's advantage, given the controversy over Iran's nuclear program and the threat of UN sanctions or even military action by the United States, Israel, or both. Nevertheless, Eisenstadt continued, "a government [in Iraq] that is seen as a viable democratic model might be a source of embarrassment for Iran." Geoff Porter, a Middle East analyst with the Eurasia Group, went even further on this last point and argued that "if Iraq were to evolve into an Islamist democracy, this would be a bad example for Iran, which would be forced to entertain alternative forms of an Islamist state that differ from the current iteration."[19]

Tehran was clearly nervous about the American (and NATO) military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan and the ensuing instability in both of these countries, including drastic increases in drug trafficking and ethnic tension, which have spilled over into Iran. Added to this concern was the well-established US infantry, naval, and aerial presence in the Persian Gulf, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The socioeconomic and political challenges from within Iran, where two-thirds of the population is under thirty years old and national development has been tangibly hurt because of American economic, political, and diplomatic pressure, also have had security implications for this state. That is, the Iranian leadership strongly believed that the United States was intent on regime change in Iran, especially given the presence of powerful neoconservatives in the Bush administration. Iran's controversial nuclear program further intensified American political pressure on Iran's government, while the Iranian government tried to tie its leverage in Iraq to its ambitions for a civilian, and perhaps military, nuclear program.[20]

Although some Sunni Arabs accused Iraqi leaders of allowing Shi'a Badr corps or brigades (a military group with close ties and even loyalty to Iran) members to infiltrate Iraq's security forces and carry out sectarian violence, this does not indicate an Iranian conspiracy to destabilize Iraq for the sake of keeping American troops preoccupied and thus away from Iran.[21] It is true that SCIRI's military wing, the twelve-thousand-strong Badr Brigades, has received financial and training support from Iran's Revolutionary Guard in the past, and Iran also supports Sadr's Mahdi Army, which on occasion has clashed with the Badr Brigades. The Shi'a religious leaders in Iraq are also the natural allies of Iran, no matter the differences in their tactics in dealing with the occupation. Furthermore, the Sunni religious leadership in Iraq does not necessarily see the Shi'a establishment as a primary enemy. The religious doctrinal differences between the two communities are somewhat significant, but they share the Qur'an, the *shari'a* (Islamic tradition), the Five Pillars of Islam, and the cultural foundations of the faith. Followers of the both sects of Islam have lived together for centuries without a history of communal clashes.[22]

The Sunni-Shi'a divide in Iraq is mainly the result of political jockeying among major contenders of power in Iraq and has been exacerbated by the American military and political presence, creating the perception that the Shi'a-dominated government is merely an American puppet government that is also being exploited by the Iranians. Shi'as in Iraq, Lebanon, the Persian Gulf states, and elsewhere see an opportunity to break away from their sociopolitical and economic deprivation through Islamic revivalism. Given the historic religious ties and the majority Shi'a population, Islam will certainly play a central, if not dominating, role in the future of any Iraqi government. The challenge to the United States is to prevent the establishment of an anti-American Shi'a-dominated or an anti-American Arab Sunni/Shi'a-dominated religious state. It is in the long-term American national interest to embrace a democratically, albeit religious, elected Iraqi (and Iranian) government, since the *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars) and Islamists are not inherently anti-American.

CONCLUSION

Contrary to political rhetoric by Bush administration statesmen, the United States was not seriously committed to establishing democracy in the Middle East. Generally speaking, the US policy in the region did not promote democracy throughout the Cold War, and it preferred political stability over democracy in order to protect interests deemed more important, including countering Soviet threats, protecting Israel, and maintaining access to oil fields. The United States has cast a blind eye to human rights abuses in Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and elsewhere in the Muslim world. Removing Saddam from power had little to do with the liberation of the Iraqi people. The connection between the two was mentioned, of course, usually with great enthusiasm, but as Lawrence Freedman stated, "Emancipation was not the reason why the Bush administration went to war or invoked international law to justify it. For Cheney and Rumsfeld, the war was about solving the Saddam problem rather than the Iraq problem, about bringing security rather than justice, about toppling the regime rather than building one. After all, the Bush administration had profoundly said that it was not in the business of nation building and would happily leave it to others."[23]

The US strategy to create a secular and democratic Iraq was unrealistic from the start, given Iraq's large Shi'a population, the Shi'a clerical power over their adherents, and their strong connections with religious and political establishments in neighboring Iran. Not only were the numerous strategic and tactical mistakes made in Iraq the result of bad judgment, but they also reflected a lack of fundamental understanding of the nature of Iraq's cultural, religious, and sociopolitical settings. The military and administrative mismanagement of Iraq also played into the hands of Iraqi opposition to the American military presence. High levels of sectarianism in Iraq—even after the departure of the overwhelming majority of US forces in December 2011—will likely allow for continued external influence in Iraq's political development, especially from Iran. Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia are other neighbors of Iraq with long-term competing and complementary interests in the composition of future Iraqi governments. Sunni-Shi'a power relations, the future of Kurdish autonomy and/or independence, and the future security of the Persian Gulf region are also central to the future of these countries. Iraq's Shi'a domination and Iran's rising power, however, gives Iran an edge in Iraq, and the United States must realize that.

The final resolution to the conflict in Iraq rests in a compromise over the division of political power and socioeconomic resources among the contending religious and ethnic rivals. The United States must understand that Islam and the *ulama* will continue to play a central role in Iraqi politics and society as both a divisive and a unifying force in the future. It is not unreasonable to assume that any long-term US military presence in Iraq will undercut the legitimacy of Iraqi governments and will be challenged by the Iranian and Syrian governments. The solution to this dilemma can be reached through political rapprochement with these governments to provide for a long-term Persian Gulf security and to improve chances for a final resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Notes

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13. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2006).

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16. Mark Perry and Alastair Crooke, "How to Lose the War on Terror: Talking with the 'Terrorists,'" *Asia Times,* March 31, 2006. Crooke is the former Middle East adviser to European Union high representative Javier Solana and served as a staff member of the Mitchell

Commission investigating the causes of the second *intifada.* Perry is a Washington, DC–based political consultant, author of six books on US history, and a former personal adviser to Yasser Arafat.

17. The extensive ties that bind the Shi'a *ulama* in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere are well known to observers of the Middle East. Basic information is available online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qom.

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CHAPTER 16

THE UNITED STATES AND SAUDI ARABIA

Thomas W. Lippman

Before World War II, the United States had few economic or strategic interests in the Middle East, and little official presence. After the demise of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the region was essentially divided into British and French spheres of influence. In the 1930s, on the vast Arabian Peninsula, Britain controlled Oman, the crown colony of Aden, and the sheikhdoms along the Persian Gulf. Most of the peninsula's land mass, however, was incorporated into the new kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which King Abdul Aziz al-Saud created in 1932. Saudi Arabia was different from its neighbors in that the land and tribes united by Abdul Aziz had never been dominated by any foreign power; the writ of the Ottomans had never penetrated much inland from the coasts. The United States extended diplomatic recognition to the new kingdom, but there was no US embassy or consulate. The skimpy reports the State Department received about developments in Saudi Arabia came mostly from Aden and Cairo.

Within a year of establishing his new realm, King Abdul Aziz granted an exclusive concession to the Standard Oil Company of California to explore for oil. The most religiously conservative and tradition-bound of his subjects opposed the presence of any non-Muslim foreigners in their land, but the king understood that his country, one of the most backward in the world at the time, would never develop without the capital and technology that foreigners could provide. He chose the Americans as his partner because they outbid the British but also because he deemed the United States strategically preferable: it had no history of hegemony or colonization in the region that might threaten his cherished independence.

By the end of the 1930s, American geologists had found oil in potentially great quantities, and Standard Oil had established a residential community in Dhahran, near the Gulf coast. To communicate with the Saudi government, the oil company stationed a representative on the other side of the country, in Jeddah, the ramshackle Red Sea port where a smattering of foreign diplomats resided. None of those diplomats were Americans; when the Saudis wanted to deal with the United States, they did so through the oil company.

In the years leading up to World War II, the kingdom's entrenched poverty was exacerbated by a decline in pilgrimage traffic to Mecca because of the Great Depression; at the time, a tax on pilgrims was the government's chief source of revenue. Oil exports began in 1939 but quickly came to a virtual halt when the war broke out in Europe. There were reports of starvation in the hinterlands. After advancing millions of dollars in loans to the Saudi government, secured by future revenue, the oil company appealed to Washington for help.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt at first declined, saying that the kingdom was "a little far afield for us" and the British should take the lead there.[1] But the war soon brought a complete reversal of Washington's attitude about the importance of Saudi Arabia and a level of US involvement in Saudi affairs that no one had envisioned before Pearl Harbor.

Roosevelt had received admiring reports about King Abdul Aziz and was soon hearing from his national security team about the kingdom's growing strategic importance. Fighting a two-front war, the War Department wanted a strategic base in the Middle East, where Britain was proving to be a difficult ally, and the US Navy was worried about fuel supply in far-off seas. In April 1942, the United States opened its first diplomatic mission in Jeddah. The following year, the president received a memo from Harold Ickes, the government's wartime oil administrator, alerting him to the urgency of securing new long-term supplies of oil because the United States was already at full production and demand was rising.

In that era, Saudi Arabia was still largely cut off from the outside world; communications and transportation were primitive, and most of its citizens were uneducated except for rudimentary religious instruction. The only Americans in the kingdom before the Jeddah mission opened were the skeleton crew known as the "Hundred Men" who were maintaining the oil installations. Moreover, Saudi Arabia was neutral in the war. Thus the kingdom was an unlikely candidate for a durable strategic and economic alliance with the United States, but both countries were led by men who could envision a different future. Roosevelt declared the kingdom eligible to receive assistance under the wartime lend-lease program, earning the king's gratitude.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT MEETS KING ABDUL AZIZ

In February 1945, with the outcome of the war no longer in doubt, an ailing President Roosevelt journeyed to Yalta, in the Crimea, for his famous meeting with Churchill and Stalin and then sailed down to Egypt to meet with three leaders of the developing world in whom he was interested: King Farouk of Egypt, Emperor Haile Selassie of

Ethiopia, and King Abdul Aziz—who, having no passenger airplanes or ships of his own, was transported from Jeddah aboard a US Navy destroyer.

Here was an encounter between two men from the opposite poles of civilization: Roosevelt the patrician from Harvard, the king a desert warrior bearing the scars of sword wounds. And yet the two men hit it off, establishing an unlikely rapport based on mutual respect. It has often been written that this meeting sealed the oil-for-security understanding that formed the basis of the bilateral relationship, but such is not the case. Oil was not an issue because Standard Oil already had the exclusive concession in Saudi Arabia, valid until 1993. Most of the two leaders' conversation was about the future of Palestine, where the British had signaled their intention to abandon the governing mandate that they had received from the League of Nations.

On that subject, Roosevelt thought he could charm the king into flexibility that would allow some accommodation of Zionist aspirations for a Jewish homeland, but he was wrong. The king yielded no ground in his opposition to any such proposal. The two leaders agreed to disagree and tried to put the best diplomatic face on it. A joint statement prepared after the meeting reported that "His Majesty stated that the hope of the Arabs is based upon the word of honor of the Allies and upon the well-known love of justice of the United States," to which "the President replied that he wished to assure His Majesty that he would do nothing to assist the Jews against the Arabs and would make no move hostile to the Arab people." His government, the president said, "would make no change in its basic policy in Palestine without full and prior consultation with both the Jews and the Arabs."[2] It was hardly the last time the United States and Saudi Arabia would clash over this subject, but it did not present—and to this day has never presented—an insuperable obstacle to a wide-ranging bilateral relationship.

The two leaders parted as friends, the king appreciative of his gifts from the president: the president's backup wheelchair, to ease the king's difficulty in walking, and a DC-3 passenger airplane, which was delivered by an American pilot named Joe Grant. Grant stayed in Saudi Arabia for many years as the king's personal pilot. After the meeting, King Abdul Aziz declared war on the Axis powers, which was Roosevelt's price for granting the kingdom charter membership in the United Nations. Saudi Arabia never fired a shot, but by declaring war it became a de facto ally of the United States.

THE CRUCIAL TRUMAN YEARS

Thus, by the early years of the Truman administration, Saudi Arabia held a completely different position on the strategic map of the world as seen from Washington than it had held in 1941. The United States was providing financial aid. The State Department's mission in Jeddah was upgraded to full embassy status. The king had granted permission for the establishment of a consulate and the construction of a US air base in Dhahran. The US Navy was buying Saudi oil for its ships. With Britain exhausted by the war, responsibility for security in Gulf oil fields would increasingly fall to the United States.

As oil revenue surged after the war, Saudi Arabia began its national development process, largely in partnership with the United States government and with American businesses. Giant US corporations such as Bechtel and General Electric picked up lucrative contracts. President Harry Truman declared Saudi Arabia eligible for technical assistance under his Point Four program. As part of his price for allowing the United States to construct its air base and for allowing US commercial planes to use it, the king had sought help in the development of a national airline, a task that fell to Transcontinental and Western Airlines, or TWA. Americans from TWA trained Saudi pilots and maintenance crews for decades. An American economic consultant wrote the charter for the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, or central bank, and brought order to the kingdom's currency chaos.[3]

Among the innovations brought to Saudi Arabia by Americans in those early years were the baby stroller, the long-handled hoe, animal husbandry techniques, the brassiere, radio, pumped irrigation, and even time itself: the country operated by the rising and setting sun until 1964, when the Ford Foundation persuaded King Faisal to set a national time of GMT+3.[4] Standard, now known as Chevron, established an operating subsidiary known as California Arabian Standard Oil Company, or CASOC. Seeking additional capital, Chevron later took in as partners Standard Oil of New Jersey (now Exxon), Mobil (now part of ExxonMobil), and Texaco (now part of Chevron) and in 1947 renamed the joint enterprise Aramco, for Arabian American Oil Company. It arranged for the education of generations of Saudi boys.

When in 1950 Congress lifted a ban on military assistance to Middle Eastern countries, President Truman declared that giving such aid to Saudi Arabia was "essential" to American national security. "In making this determination," his notice said, "I find that (1) the strategic location of Saudi Arabia makes it of direct importance to the defense of the Near East area, (2) the assistance to be furnished is of critical importance to the defense of free nations, and (3) the immediately increased ability of Saudi Arabia to defend itself is important to the peace and security of the Near East area, and to the security of the United States."[5] Similar words have been used by presidents ever since to support military training and arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Truman's proclamation and Saudi Arabia's subsequent agreement to extend the US lease on the Dhahran airfield led to the creation, in 1951, of the first US Military Training Mission, establishing a military-to-military relationship that has continued ever since.

Yet this was always a transactional alliance, devoid of the emotional or cultural ties that linked Americans to Europe or Latin America. Even today most Americans trace their ancestry, religion, food, music, and literature to non-Arab roots, which is part of the reason Saudi Arabia has never had many enthusiasts in Congress. Nor has the alliance been based on shared values or shared views about social organization and human rights: on those matters, the countries are polar opposites.

The Truman administration, in fact, fully recognized and accepted the anomalies inherent in a strategic and economic partnership with an absolute monarchy dominated by xenophobia and religious intolerance. In February 1951, the State Department distributed to all its posts in a region a comprehensive "Policy

Statement" about the kingdom. It said, in effect, that Americans were in Saudi Arabia to advance US interests, not to tell the Saudis how to run their lives or organize their society. "In all our efforts to carry out our policies in Saudi Arabia, we should take care to serve as guide or partner and avoid giving the impression of wishing to dominate the country," the document said. Bilateral relations would thrive, it said, "if we do not attempt to upset the basic religious patterns of life in Saudi Arabia by too rapid an introduction of Western ways." In other words, we were there to make money and to fend off Soviet influence; Saudi human rights policies were not our business.[6] That has been US policy ever since. It is the reason the State Department's annual reports on human rights, which regularly flog the Saudis for their dismal record on this subject, never affect US policy. Indeed, until the early 1970s, the State Department, the US Air Force, and Aramco deferred to Saudi religious sensitivities to the point that they refrained from assigning any Jews to work in the kingdom.

Charles W. Freeman Jr., a witty diplomat and scholar who was the US ambassador to Saudi Arabia in the early 1990s, gave this explanation of the cultural divide:

> Saudi Arabia is unique in the following sense. It is the only traditional non-Western kingdom, political structure, if you will, that has survived intact into the modern age without having been conquered or significantly bent to Western ways. Japan, of course, was conquered by the United States in World War II. Swaziland, another traditional kingdom . . . had been taken over by the British. Thailand, where I'd also served, had deliberately absorbed many Western ways as part of its tactic of survival and adaptation. But Saudi Arabia experienced no missionaries, no soldiers, no foreign influence at all. And when the West came to Saudi Arabia, it came essentially as hired help.
>
> The Saudi mentality, therefore, is much less full of self-doubt, much more self-confident, not to say smug and complacent. The Saudis, because of this history, lacked the angst that make many other Arabs, for example, Lebanese or Syrians or Egyptians, so full of self-deprecating humor. The Saudis are a very reserved, rather dour, dignified people, with few self-doubts. Their history teaches them that the more religiously devout they are, the more oil comes out of the ground.[7]

Tens of thousands of Americans have lived and worked in Saudi Arabia over the past seventy years, but few of them developed close attachments in the Arab community. Like the oil workers at Dhahran, they generally lived in compounds where life was similar to life at home. Outside the compounds, they were required to abide by Saudi social and religious customs and were prohibited from practicing their own religions. Partly because of those cultural differences, and partly because the United States has worldwide economic and strategic interests that have not always been congruent with those of Saudi Arabia, the bilateral relationship has on occasion been severely strained, though never to the point of open rupture.

FREQUENT GRIEVANCES BUT NO RUPTURES

The first test came with Truman's recognition of Israel as soon as it proclaimed its independence in 1948. The Arabs were furious, including King Abdul Aziz, who thought Truman had gone back on the "full consultation" commitment he had received from Roosevelt. His son Prince Faisal and other Arab leaders urged him to revoke the Aramco concession to punish the United States for Truman's action, but he refused to do so. The oil operation was the country's only source of development capital, he said; the kingdom could not afford grand gestures of principle.

That decision by the king established a pattern that has endured for seven decades: one side or the other feels deeply aggrieved over some political decision or strategic action by the other, yet neither ever goes so far as to rupture an economic and security relationship that both value.

This dynamic was displayed most dramatically during and after the 1973 Middle Eastern war, when the Saudis joined other Arab oil producers in cutting off shipments to the United States and a few other countries in response to a massive US airlift of weapons and equipment to Israel. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's national security adviser, declared at the time that it was "ridiculous that the civilized world is held up by eight million savages."[8] Defense Secretary James Schlesinger and other Pentagon officials advocated military action to seize the oil fields. To Kissinger's frustration, this crisis lasted until late the following spring while Americans waited in long lines for gasoline and the White House imposed restrictions on energy consumption. Yet within a year afterward, relations between Washington and Riyadh reached a whole new level of closeness and engagement.

The oil embargo and the spectacular increase in the world price of oil that followed greatly elevated the kingdom's importance: Americans wanted oil market stability, and they wanted Saudi Arabia to spend as much of its new wealth as possible in the United States. As soon as the embargo ended, the two nations negotiated a wide-ranging and ambitious technical assistance agreement, along with new military training accords and arms supply deals.

The most unorthodox was the creation of a US-Saudi Arabian Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation (JECOR), a unique venture that would install American government workers directly into the day-to-day work of Saudi Arabia's ministries, universities, and economic agencies and that would channel those organizations' contracts to American firms. For twenty-five years, until the end of the Clinton administration, American civil servants and consultants worked in Saudi Arabia teaching the Saudis basic functions of government: how to centralize procurement, use sniffer dogs at customs, calculate the consumer price index, operate an agricultural development bank, evaluate university faculty, and carry out other mundane state functions. It was nation building in the literal sense, but Congress never objected because the Saudis paid for it. No appropriated funds were used.[9]

The JECOR agreement was signed in June 1974. A week later President Richard Nixon, crippled by the Watergate scandal and near the point of being forced from office, toured the Middle East in a last diplomatic hurrah. His final stop was Saudi Arabia, where he received a lavish welcome as the first US president to visit.

His successor, Gerald Ford, embraced and implemented the bilateral agreement: by 1975, the value of US military sales to the Saudis had reached $5 billion.[10]

President Jimmy Carter, who succeeded Ford in January 1977, maintained this close relationship with Riyadh, even though elsewhere he made human rights the cornerstone of his foreign policy, and even though he was deeply disappointed by Saudi Arabia's refusal to endorse the Arab-Israeli peace initiative of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat. In 1979, the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan further bolstered the strategic importance of Saudi Arabia. The fall of the shah eliminated the only Gulf regime that could rival Saudi Arabia for primacy in Washington's strategic assessments, and the developments in Afghanistan enhanced the importance of Saudi Arabia's strong anti-Communism.

A DEEPENING MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

By the time Ronald Reagan succeeded Carter in the White House, the United States and Saudi Arabia were developing an increasingly close military relationship in which the United States was the principal trainer of Saudi troops and supplier of weapons. The Saudis opened a multibillion-dollar account at the Federal Reserve to provide cash for weapons purchases, becoming a client upon whom defense industries in the United States were heavily dependent.[11] As one military analyst noted, by 1974, 60 percent of all sales under the Foreign Military Sales Act were to Persian Gulf countries. "Furthermore, the character of those sales had radically changed. Whereas in previous decades nations only sold older, less capable weapons abroad," this analysis said, "by the mid-1970s the Gulf states were fielding the latest in western technology," including advanced combat jets.[12]

The Military Sales Act allows proposed sales of arms and equipment to proceed unless specifically rejected by Congress, a provision that enabled Israel's many supporters on Capitol Hill to weigh in on every transaction with Saudi Arabia. Reagan tested the limits of public and congressional tolerance for sales to autocratic regimes hostile to Israel with a proposal to sell the Saudis sophisticated spy planes equipped with Airborne Warning and Control Systems, or AWACS. An AWACS plane is a modified Boeing 707 jetliner equipped with a huge rotating antenna that can detect other aircraft, of any size and over any terrain, in an area of about 175,000 square miles. Israel and its supporters in Congress were strongly opposed to the AWACS sale, and it went through only after months of public exhortation and private arm-twisting by Reagan and his senior defense advisers. The Saudis got their planes, but their feelings were bruised, not for the last time.

Opposition to selling sophisticated weaponry to the Saudis remained strong and broad, and it surfaced again in 1985, when Congress balked at the proposed sale of Stinger portable antiaircraft missiles and additional F-15 jet fighters. Miffed, the Saudis signed a $4.8 billion agreement with Great Britain to acquire Tornado combat jets and other weapons.[13]

Explaining that decision to a group of disappointed McDonnell Douglas executives, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the kingdom's colorful ambassador in Washington, said, "We are not masochists. We don't like to spend billions of dollars and get insulted in the process."[14]

Those Reagan-era arguments about weapons sales were symptomatic of an ambivalence in the bilateral relationship that still exists. Saudi Arabia has never been popular with Congress or the American public, and the Saudis, fully aware of that and of their own people's antipathy to foreigners, are uncomfortable with their strategic dependence on the United States. But the two countries have always managed to work through or around these differences because their interests coincide more often than not, as was dramatically demonstrated in Afghanistan.

There, in the early 1980s, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan set up a three-way arrangement in which the United States and Saudi Arabia provided funding to Pakistan, which used the money to organize, train, and equip the anti-Soviet Afghan irregulars known as the mujahideen. Aided by American-supplied antiaircraft missiles that enabled them to shoot down helicopter gunships (the same type of missiles that Congress later refused to sell directly to Saudi Arabia), the Afghans gradually wore down the Soviet occupiers, who withdrew in ignominy in 1989. Covert partnership and intelligence-sharing with Saudi Arabia had become a fact of life inside the Beltway.[15]

The outcome in Afghanistan appeared at the time to be a major success for Riyadh and Washington; neither fully recognized the menace that they left lurking there. Among the fighters in Afghanistan who opposed the Soviet occupation were the so-called Afghan Arabs, volunteers from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries organized by Osama bin Laden. The future leader of al Qa'ida used his family's construction fortune to purchase weapons and recruit Arab volunteers for the mujahideen and to establish training camps for them inside Afghanistan. The potential threat from that source became apparent only some years later.

In the environment of the Cold War, the overriding importance of forcing the Soviets out of Afghanistan enabled Washington and Riyadh to get past an unrelated crisis that could have blown up their working arrangements. In March 1988, the United States discovered through aerial reconnaissance that the Saudis had secretly acquired at least thirty-six CSS-2 nuclear-capable intermediate-range ballistic missiles from China. These behemoths, weighing nearly seventy tons, have a range of about 1,900 miles, which meant that they could reach Israel. Because of their inaccuracy, they are useful only as delivery vehicles for weapons of mass destruction. Saudi Arabia refused to let the United States inspect the missile site, which was manned by Chinese crews.

The missile purchase made sense to the Saudis, who were surrounded by countries that were missile-capable and who understood that no comparable weapons could be obtained from the United States, but to the Reagan administration it appeared dangerous and destabilizing in many ways, even apart from the potential menace to Israel. It accelerated the regional missile race, demonstrated a streak of independence and duplicity that Washington did not anticipate from Riyadh, and introduced China as an arms supplier to a country that had made opposition to Communism the foundation of its relations with the United States. Deployment of such missiles in Saudi Arabia signaled to Washington that the Saudis might be secretly pursuing nuclear weapons, perhaps even planning to allow other countries to use them against Israel. The Israelis promptly warned that they might attack the missiles to preclude any possibility that they would face a nuclear-armed Arab foe—a serious concern for Washington, given that Israel had bombed a nuclear reactor in Iraq a few years earlier.[16]

"The Israelis told us, let it be known, that we better do something about those missiles or they would," said Hume Horan, ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the time. "We told the Saudis that there are nations in the area that are very concerned and are threatening to take matters into their own hands."[17]

Revelation of the missiles set off a predictable storm in Congress. Bipartisan majorities in both houses promptly approved resolutions opposing any further sale of ground support equipment for the kingdom's AWACS planes. The administration held off on formal notification to Congress of a new sale of $450 million worth of military equipment.

This contretemps ended with a deal brokered by Prince Bandar. According to Richard Murphy, then assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs and a former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, King Fahd ibn Abdul Aziz assured President Reagan in writing that the Saudis "do not have and they have no intention of acquiring either nuclear or chemical warheads." Saudi Arabia agreed to sign the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a step it had previously refused to take on the grounds that Israel had not done so. In exchange, the United States allowed the Saudis to keep the missiles without further retaliatory action.[18]

After the missile affair and the victory in Afghanistan, there was a brief period of stability in the region and in the bilateral relationship. The war between Iraq and Iran ended, as did the so-called tanker war in the Gulf. The threat of Communism receded with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Oil prices stabilized at a consumer-friendly level. Adel al-Jubeir, then a young diplomat in Prince Bandar's embassy and later foreign minister, organized a remarkably successful effort to court American Jews and persuade them not to reflexively oppose every arms deal with his country.[19] But the Saudis were still feeling bruised by their experiences in the arms-sale arguments, so that, as Ambassador Freeman put it, "although the relationship was cordial on one level, it was also quite strained on others. And, by 1989, the United States had fallen to fourth place among Saudi Arabia's suppliers of military equipment and services; that is, the British, French, and Chinese were all ahead of us, which was hardly a healthy state for the relationship."[20]

Then, in the summer of 1990, Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait. Iraqi troops were at Saudi Arabia's northern border. President George H. W. Bush, declaring that "this will not stand," almost immediately committed the United States to rescuing Kuwait and offered to protect Saudi Arabia, which he and his national security team believed would be Saddam Hussein's next target.[21] King Fahd needed little persuading. Within six months more than a half million American and allied troops had assembled in Saudi Arabia, preparing to march north into Kuwait and drive out the Iraqis.

When the troops were in place, Bush issued an ultimatum to Iraq: leave Kuwait by January 15 or our military coalition will force you out. When Iraq did not comply, the United States and its partners struck, first with an intense aerial campaign, then with a ground invasion. The American operation was commanded by General Norman Schwarzkopf; the international contingent, including troops from Egypt and Syria, was led by Saudi Arabia's General Khalid bin Sultan, a son of the defense minister.

The ground war was over in less than a week. Iraqi troops fled Kuwait, setting fire to Kuwait's oil wells as they went. More than 20,000 Iraqi soldiers died; coalition deaths totaled 246. Kuwait's ruling family was restored to power.[22] Yet this total military success also had negative consequences for both Saudi Arabia and the United States and created new turbulence in the bilateral relationship.

First, the deployment of the Americans and other foreign troops—including Jews and Humvee-driving women—represented a deep cultural shock to the Saudi people. All previous foreign presence had been justified by the kings as necessary for the country's development; no such rationalization was available this time, and even if it had been many Saudis had another complaint: they could not understand why their country could not defend itself after all the billions of dollars it had spent on its armed forces.

Second, not all of the American military personnel went home after Operation Desert Storm, as the king had promised they would. A substantial contingent remained to enforce a no-fly zone over Iraq imposed by the United Nations Security Council, and more arrived after Saddam Hussein again appeared to threaten Kuwait in 1994. Their presence became a *casus belli* for Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'ida, especially because the king and his defense minister had rebuffed an offer from bin Laden to reassemble his fighters from Afghanistan to confront the Iraqis, which would have obviated the need for all those infidel foreigners.

Then, at a time when oil prices were stagnant or declining, the United States bullied Saudi Arabia into picking up the bill for Desert Storm.

"I personally collected $16.9 billion from King Fahd, including $3.2 billion that he had never agreed to," Ambassador Freeman recalled.

> The fact is that the Saudis, on the eve of the outbreak of the war, August 2, 1990, probably had liquid assets, above the currency cover that was required by law, of only $3 billion. They went through that and then some in the first week. The net result of the war, notwithstanding [the State Department's] frankly injurious and self-serving analysis, since they were telling Secretary [James A.] Baker what he wanted to hear, was to take Saudi Arabia from zero national debt to a national debt equivalent to 55 percent of GNP, overnight. In other words, the Saudis spent unbudgeted funds equivalent, in terms of the U.S. economy, to roughly $4 trillion. The Saudi Arabian economy is an economy of about $100 billion, the size of the State of Georgia. And while that provides fabulous wealth for a few, and a moderate standard of living for the many, it does not provide an endless cornucopia of dollars with which to do everything they wish.[23]

It took Saudi Arabia the better part of a decade to pay off that debt.

The ouster of Iraqi occupiers from Kuwait did not end the perceived menace to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf principalities from the regime of Saddam Hussein, who retained and consolidated his power. For one reason or another, policy toward Iraq remained a sore point in US-Saudi relations for years afterward.

BILL CLINTON, DUAL CONTAINMENT, AND FRAYING TIES

In retrospect, the years of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush can be seen as the high-water mark in US-Saudi relations, at least until the presidency of Donald Trump two decades later. By the time Bill Clinton became president in 1993, Saudi Arabia was maturing as a country; its people were educated, and they no longer needed American help to build their infrastructure or manage their government and economy. Internationally, the demise of the Soviet Union eliminated the great strategic threat that had united Washington and Riyadh. The old anti-Communist alignment of the United States, Iran, and Saudi Arabia was eliminated by the Iranian revolution and the collapse of international Communism. The Clinton administration adopted a new strategic framework for the Gulf region, a policy of "dual containment" of Iraq and Iran. Two very different countries that just a few years before had been at war with each other were now lumped together in US policy as threats to Gulf stability and security.

It might have seemed that such a policy would be welcome to the Saudis because it aimed at limiting the power and influence of two of their most dangerous neighbors. But to them, Iran and Iraq were not equally menacing. In their view, an Iraq chastened and weakened by Desert Storm was still a valuable bulwark against a much more threatening Iran. In any case, the policy was inherently unworkable, as the scholar Gregory Gause wrote in *Foreign Affairs*:

> The dual containment policy is shot through with logical flaws and practical inconsistencies and is based on faulty geopolitical premises. It is hard to see how either Iraq or Iran could be contained, in the administration's sense, without the cooperation of its hostile counterpart. American allies in the region and elsewhere have shown no enthusiasm for dual containment, making its implementation highly problematic. Dual containment offers no guidelines for dealing with change in the gulf, and it ties American policy to an inherently unstable regional status quo. Worse yet, it assigns to the United States a unilateral role in managing gulf security issues at a time when the American capacity to influence events in Iran and Iraq is at best limited. The policy could end up encouraging the very results, regional conflict and increased Iranian power, that the United States seeks to prevent.[24]

As Rachel Bronson put it in her analysis of the bilateral relationship, "As the 1990s wore on, the strain between the United States and Saudi Arabia around Iraq policy became increasingly obvious," especially as new international media organizations such as Al Jazeera publicized the hardships inflicted on ordinary Iraqis by US-backed international sanctions.[25] To cite one example, when Iraqi aircraft violated the no-fly rules to bomb rebel Kurdish outposts, King Abdullah rejected a US request to fly retaliatory air strikes from Saudi Arabia.

One 1999 report to Congress noted dryly, “Some Arab governments that would privately welcome the departure of Saddam Hussein are unwilling to support limited U.S. measures that provoke the Iraqi dictator but do not remove him from power, leaving him in a position to extract future revenge on his neighbors.”[26] Chief among those Arab governments was Saudi Arabia. The Saudis deemed inadequate the Clinton administration’s repeated but limited air strikes in response to Iraqi provocations, but they were unable to offer a credible alternative, so the matter remained unresolved. Dual containment died a quiet death in 1999, but no overall regional strategy to replace it developed.

In the twenty-first century, the bilateral relationship has hit one rough patch after another. During Clinton’s final years in the White House and at the start of George W. Bush’s tenure, on some levels it was business as usual. Military training continued uninterrupted. Increasing numbers of Saudi students came to the United States for university education. Aramco, which the Saudis had nationalized through a negotiated purchase, not by expropriation, formed a joint venture with Texaco to operate refineries and filling stations in the American South and Southeast. When oil prices plummeted after the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, the United States gave tacit consent to Saudi Arabia’s efforts to stop the fall and nudge the price back up.[27]

But Bush, who became president in January 2001, got off to a rocky start in his dealings with Saudi Arabia and would never achieve the level of partnership and respect that his father had had. On February 16, the United States and Britain sent warplanes based in the Gulf to bomb radar sites and military command centers in Iraq. When reports emerged from the Pentagon that some of the planes were based in Saudi Arabia, the Saudis were furious because, as David B. Ottaway wrote, “the unwritten rule for U.S. warplanes based in the kingdom was that they would not be used for attack operations over southern Iraq, much less further north outside the no-fly zone.” The Saudis were laying out $100 million a year to cover the cost of enforcing the no-fly zone and they had not been consulted about these air raids. Crown Prince Abdullah, who was running Saudi Arabia because of the illness of King Fahd, imposed new restrictions that limited US use of Saudi bases and airspace.[28]

Bush assumed office in the midst of the Palestinian uprising against Israel known as the al-Aqsa *intifada.* When Bush and his advisers made clear that they had no intention of getting bogged down in the Israel-Palestine issue, as their predecessors had, Crown Prince Abdullah in May turned down an invitation to visit the White House. In August he instructed the Saudi ambassador, Prince Bandar, to deliver what Bandar called “the hardest message I’ve had to deliver between our two countries since I started working in this country” eighteen years earlier. “From now on,” the message said, “you have your interests and the kingdom has its interests, and you have your road and we have our road.”[29]

THE TERRORISM ERA

Then came September 11, 2001, and the attacks on New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The fact that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were of Saudi origin and took their orders from another Saudi, Osama bin Laden, enraged Americans and shredded the protective cocoon that American business interests and diplomats had built around the kingdom for decades. All the least palatable aspects of Saudi society—the tolerance for and even encouragement of extremism, the repressive political system, the anti-intellectualism of the schools, the corruption—were suddenly on glaring display. After years of looking the other way, Americans subjected Saudi Arabia to intense scrutiny, and they did not like much of what they saw. This American antipathy to Saudi Arabia showed through even fifteen years later when Congress voted overwhelmingly to override a veto by President Barack Obama and allow survivors and the families of victims of the 9/11 attacks to sue the kingdom in US courts.

The Saudis at the time seemed unable to comprehend the ferocity of American outrage over what had happened on September 11. They rejected any notion of collective guilt and said the Americans were overreacting. After all, they said, the al-Saud rulers were hardly supporters of bin Laden: the regime itself was bin Laden's primary target. Bin Laden, they noted, had been stripped of his Saudi citizenship some years before, and the hijackers were outliers in Saudi society and did not even live in the kingdom. The Saudis chafed at the hair-raising warnings against travel to the kingdom that the State Department issued after terrorist attacks in Riyadh in 2003, and at Washington's decision to withdraw all dependents of US government employees from the kingdom. Americans complained that while the Saudis officially condemned the 9/11 attacks, they refused to acknowledge that Riyadh's decadelong practice of flooding the Muslim world with an extremist and xenophobic interpretation of the faith had nurtured an atmosphere in which terrorism could take root.

These emotions were running high in 2003 when the United States rebuffed Saudi warnings and invaded Iraq to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein. President Bush ordered the invasion because he and his senior advisers on national security believed, falsely, that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, in defiance of UN resolutions, and because they somehow associated Saddam Hussein with the events of 9/11. The Saudis were dismayed. They believed, correctly, that the only beneficiary of the US invasion would be their religious and strategic archrival, Iran, which would seize upon the Baghdad power vacuum created by the ouster of Saddam Hussein to energize Iraq's Shiite majority and build up Tehran's influence. Abdullah, who became king upon the death of Fahd in 2005, went so far as to denounce the "illegal foreign occupation" of Iraq.[30]

THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

At the same time that US investigators were struggling to establish a productive relationship with reluctant Saudi military and police officials to combat al-Qa'ida and cut off Saudi financing of extremist groups, the United States injected an unexpected new irritant. In September 2004, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice designated

Saudi Arabia a “country of particular concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act.

The Saudis have never pretended to espouse or uphold religious freedom. Under their law, all citizens must be Muslims and no other form of worship is permitted. There are no churches or synagogues. But the United States had, as a matter of policy, never made an issue of it. Under the religious freedom law, a “particular concern” designation would have required the president to impose sanctions on Saudi Arabia unless he granted a waiver for national security reasons. Bush did so, but to the Saudis this religious freedom issue, coupled with their distress over the Bush administration’s quest for greater democratization in the region, contributed to a further deterioration in the bilateral relationship.[31] Bush took the issue off the table in 2006 by issuing an indefinite waiver. A future president could make a different decision, but President Obama kept the status quo. In 2014, his State Department again designated Saudi Arabia as a country of particular concern but kept in place a waiver of any action, citing what it called the “important national interest of the United States.”[32] Judging by his early efforts to bolster relations with the kingdom, President Donald Trump is unlikely to do otherwise.

The Saudis were also miffed by statements from Bush and Rice about democracy and human values, which they saw as directed at them. Bush said that “decades of excusing and accommodating tyranny in the pursuit of stability have only led to injustice and instability and tragedy.”[33] Rice said that while the United States sometimes needs to deal with “authoritarian” regimes on security issues, “we talk about democracy because democracy is not a gift to Americans. It is something that every human being should enjoy. The blessings of liberty are what the president has called ‘the non-negotiable demands of human dignity.’ Every man, woman, and child deserves to be free.”[34] In effect, the highest-ranking foreign policy official in Washington was saying, “We have to work with the Saudis but we hold our noses while doing it.” That had always been true, but no previous secretary of state had said it publicly.

Late in his tenure, Bush sought to improve or at least stabilize relations with Riyadh. The commission that was appointed to investigate the September 11 attacks had given him the political cover to do so, finding “no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi citizens individually” funded the al-Qa’ida network.[35] On a last trip to Riyadh in May 2008 he signed a new package of bilateral agreements, including a commitment by the United States to help Saudi Arabia develop civilian nuclear energy. The White House fact sheet describing the results of Bush’s visit said the agreements “further cement the longstanding U.S.-Saudi friendship and close cooperation to help bring peace and stability to the region and its people.”[36] Still, the Saudis were happy to see Bush go. Eight years later they would be even more relieved to see the last of President Obama.

THE OBAMA YEARS

The Saudis were greatly heartened by the events and statements of Obama’s first months in office. In a goodwill signal to the Arabs, he granted one of his first interviews to a pan-Arab news outlet, *Al Arabiya*. In April, he received King Abdullah at the White House, the first foreign leader he so honored.

Two months later, Obama stopped in Riyadh to meet Abdullah again on his way to Cairo to deliver what was seen as a landmark speech to, as the speech itself put it, "seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles—principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings."[37]

This apparent harmony was short-lived. Events soon overwhelmed it. Throughout the remainder of the Obama administration, relations with Saudi Arabia generally followed three tracks. On the first, each side made clear, through diplomatic channels and press leaks, that it was unhappy with some policy or decision of the other. Saudi leaders let it be known that they were distressed at the perceived alacrity with which Washington abandoned a longtime ally, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, during the Arab Spring uprisings of 2010–2011. When the United States accepted the election of Mohamed Morsi, the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, as Mubarak's successor, the Saudis interpreted that as an endorsement of the Brotherhood itself, while they branded it a terrorist organization. Above all, the Saudis were horrified when the United States and five other powers negotiated an agreement with their archrival Iran under which Iran curtailed its nuclear development program in exchange for the lifting of some sanctions. The agreement by definition enhanced the security of Saudi Arabia and Iran's other neighbors, but the Saudis saw only a zero-sum game: if Washington was making deals with the theocratic Shiite regime in Tehran, it must be reducing its commitment to Saudi Arabia. On the US side, administration officials chafed at Saudi Arabia's refusal to have any dealings, diplomatic or economic, with the Iraqi government of Nouri al-Maliki, who emerged as prime minister after the ouster of Saddam Hussein. And by Obama's final months in office, the United States was maneuvering to distance itself from a Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen, which was destroying that country to no apparent gain.

On the second track, in public statements and in briefings after high-level meetings, the two countries regularly reaffirmed their de facto alliance and pledged to strengthen it. Faced with Obama's determination to press ahead with the Iran nuclear agreement, King Salman had little choice but to accept it, however grudgingly, but the Saudis continued to be upset at what they perceived as a US failure to confront Iranian aggression across the Middle East.

And on the third track, the military and intelligence relationship not only continued without interruption, but it was broadened and strengthened. Riyadh purchased record amounts of arms and military equipment. Americans continued to train and equip the Saudi Arabian National Guard, as they have since 1977, and performed the same functions in the creation of a new thirty-five-thousand-member Facilities Security Force, which the Saudis were deploying to protect oil installations, desalination plants, and power stations. In addition, various US agencies helped the Saudis to improve security at airports and diplomatic facilities and to protect themselves against cyber attacks like the one that knocked out computer networks at the state oil company in 2012.

Visiting Riyadh in April 2016, President Obama said that despite “tactical differences,” the United States and Saudi Arabia had “reached a common vision on how to move forward, together, in key areas,” including the threat from Iran. King Salman replied that Saudi Arabia and the other members of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council were eager “to develop historical and strategic relations between our respective countries and the United States of America to serve our mutual interest as well as the security and peace of the region and the world.”[38]

It has been standard practice for many years for the US president and the Saudi king to make such comments after a meeting, regardless of differences over some issue of the day. The statements reflect the enduring reality that while neither country is popular with citizens of the other, their mutual interests in strategic and economic matters hold them together.

ENTER DONALD TRUMP

By the end of Obama’s presidency the United States had reached a low point in the esteem of Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf monarchies because of the Iran agreement and Washington’s manifest failure to broker peace or limit Iranian influence in Syria. Yet with the inauguration of Donald Trump as president, the relationship with Saudi Arabia sailed into uncharted waters.

To say that Trump sent contradictory signals would be an understatement. During his campaign Trump said that the United States should stop importing oil from the kingdom, but the man he chose as secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, was the chairman of a giant international oil company that had been a partner in the Aramco consortium and knew that the Saudis, as owners of one of the largest refineries in the United States, would import their own oil to process there. Trump had promised to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and selected a hard-line supporter of West Bank settlements as ambassador, but the embassy remained where it was. Trump’s administration moved to resume weapons sales to Saudi Arabia that Obama had suspended because of mounting civilian casualties in the Saudi-led war in Yemen. And on the subject Riyadh cares about most, Iran, Trump told the Saudis what he knew they wanted to hear. He talked aggressively about confronting Iranian troublemaking across the Middle East; as secretary of defense he chose James Mattis, a former commander of the US Central Command, who called Iran “the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world.”[39] Trump had been in office less than two months when he received at the White House Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the most powerful man in Saudi Arabia aside from his father, the king. The two went out of their way to praise and flatter each other. The White House issued a statement saying that they “reaffirmed their support for a strong, broad, and enduring strategic partnership based on a shared interest and commitment to the stability and prosperity of the Middle East region. They directed their teams to explore additional steps across a broad range of political, military, security, economic, cultural, and social dimensions to further strengthen and elevate the United States–Saudi strategic relationship for the benefit of both countries. U.S. and Saudi officials intend to consult on additional steps to deepen commercial ties and promote investment, and to expand cooperation in the energy sector."[40] A Saudi statement said that after "a period of difference of opinion," the meeting "put things on the right track, and marked a significant shift in relations, across all political, military, security and economic fields." The prince even defended Trump's ban on travel from several Muslim countries as a necessary security measure and proclaimed the president "a true friend of Muslims."[41]

In the spring of his first year, Trump traveled to Riyadh for an elaborate show of unity with Saudi Arabia, announcing new arms-sale agreements and new Saudi investments in the US economy. Then he openly took sides with Saudi Arabia in a feud with neighboring Qatar, even though Qatar hosted the largest US military base in the region.

A few months later, after inviting Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas to the White House, the president dispatched his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, to the region in an effort to forge a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israel.

But Trump also left the nuclear agreement with Iran in effect and signaled that he would do business with Syrian president Bashar al-Asad, whom the Saudis want to bring down because he is aligned with Iran. And Trump made no effort to persuade Congress to revise a 2016 law enabling American survivors and the families of victims of the 9/11 attacks to sue Saudi Arabia in US courts.[42]

CONCLUSION

If eight decades of history offer guidance, the US-Saudi marriage of convenience will probably remain intact because it suits the needs of both countries, regardless of the outcome on any single policy issue and regardless of the personalities of the leaders.

While the United States imports relatively little oil from Saudi Arabia, that oil remains essential to indispensable US allies such as Japan. The Saudis are no longer dependent on the United States for capital investment or technological assistance, but the two countries work together on a broad range of security and economic issues. The United States remains the principal supplier of Saudi Arabia's weapons and the principal trainer of its security forces. The Saudis offer stability in a region engulfed in turmoil, and the two countries work together on issues including counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and monetary policy.

Saudi Arabia is not a formal ally of the United States in the sense that Australia and Germany are. Washington and Riyadh have never had a mutual defense treaty. The two countries are still, and are likely to remain, fundamentally irreconcilable in their policies on human rights, religion, and citizen participation in government. But as a Saudi scholar once wrote, "These differences, however, have not disrupted a friendship that has existed for more than fifty years based on reasonable judgment, shared interests, and mutual respect."[43] As long as the al-Saud clan remains in power, that is likely to continue.

Notes

Much of this material is derived from my previous work on this subject and from five books: Fahad al-Nafjian, *The Origins of Saudi-American Relations* (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2009); Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), the definitive work on the military and strategic relationship; Anthony H. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009), and two of my own, *Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2004) and *Arabian Knight: Colonel Bill Eddy USMC and the Rise of American Power in the Middle East* (Vista, CA: Selwa Press, 2008). Many of the key US government policy documents through the 1970s have been compiled in the US State Department's *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, cited hereinafter as FRUS. Other State Department documents from the period up to the 1970s, now declassified, are in Records Group 59 at the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

1. National Archives, Records Group 59, 890f.51. Additional Roosevelt correspondence and memos on Saudi Arabia are in the Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY, President's Secretary's File, Box 50, and Official File, 3500.

2. The most extensive account of this meeting is in Lippman, *Arabian Knight*, 126–144. The joint statement is in FRUS 1945, vol. VIII, document 2. It was kept secret for twenty-five years.

3. On TWA, see Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 123–135. On the central bank, see Arthur N. Young, *Saudi Arabia: The Making of a Financial Giant* (New York: New York University Press, 1983). See also Young's oral history at the Truman presidential library, www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/young.htm.

4. The archives of the Ford Foundation, in New York, contain extensive documentation about the foundation's work in Saudi Arabia during this early period.

5. Memorandum by the President to the Director for Mutual Security (Stassen), March 14, 1953, FRUS 9 (1952–1954): 2438. See also Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, 57–60.

6. Policy Statement Prepared in the Department of State, February 5, 1951, FRUS 5 (1951): 1027ff.

7. Ambassador Freeman's recollections are in "Frontline Diplomacy: The U.S. Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection," compiled by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington VA, transcripts sorted by country available on compact discs from the association, www.adst.org.

8. Memorandum of Conversation, November 29, 1973, FRUS 1969-76, vol. 25, document 363.

9. The most complete account of the commission's work is in Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 167–178. See also David K. Harbinson, "The U.S.-Saudi Arabian Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation: A Critical Appraisal," *Middle East Journal* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 269–283.

10. Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, 127.

11. Ibid., 208.

12. S. Taco Gilbert, "Reagan and the AWACS Sale to Saudi Arabia: Bureaucratic Politics in Action," paper submitted for a course at the National Defense University, Washington, DC, 1996, www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a441382.pdf.

13. Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, 165–166.

14. Robert Lacey, *Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists, and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia* (New York: Viking, 2009), 107.

15. For extensive accounts of the Afghanistan events, see Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin, 2004) and George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).

16. This controversy was covered extensively in the news media at the time. See, for example, David B. Ottaway, "Talk of Israeli Raid on Saudi Missiles Concerns U.S.," *Washington Post*, March 23, 1988.

17. Interview with the author, Washington, DC, June 2, 2002.

18. Richard Murphy, testimony to House Foreign Affairs Committee, 100th Congress, 2d session, May 10, 1988.

19. Lippman, *Inside the Mirage*, 225–226.

20. Freeman, "Frontline Diplomacy: The U.S. Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection."

21. A transcript of Bush's remarks is at http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110704.

22. For a useful summary of these events, see Mark Weston, *Prophets and Princes: Saudi Arabia from Muhammad to the Present* (Hoboken NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 310–320. Schwarzkopf's account, with an extensive account of the cultural clash that came with the foreign troops, is in his memoir, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992). Khalid bin Sultan's narrative is in his *Desert Warrior* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995).

23. Freeman, "Frontline Diplomacy: The U.S. Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection."

24. F. Gregory Gause III, "The Illogic of Dual Containment," *Foreign Affairs,* March/April 1994, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/1994-03-01/illogic-dual-containment.

25. Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil,* 220.

26. Alfred B. Prados, "Iraq: Post-War Challenges and U.S. Responses, 1991–1998," CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, March 31, 1999, 23, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/98-386.pdf.

27. Ali al-Naimi, *Out of the Desert: My Journey from Nomadic Bedouin to the Heart of Global Oil* (New York: Portfolio Penguin, 2016), 202.

28. David B. Ottaway, *The King's Messenger: Prince Bandar bin Sultan and America's Tangled Relationship with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Walker & Co., 2008), 145–147.

29. Cited in F. Gregory Gause III, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 146; slightly different versions of this episode are in Ottaway, *The King's Messenger*, 149–150, and Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil*, 232.

30. This comment was widely reported in the news media. See, for example, "King Abdullah: U.S. Occupation 'Illegitimate,'" *Asharq al-Awsat,* March 29, 2007, http://english.aawsat.com/2007/03/article55263211/king-abdullah-u-s-occupation-illegitimate.

31. United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *2015 Annual Report,* 60–61, http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/USCIRF%20Annual%20Report%202015%20%282%29.pdf.

32. Ibid.

33. George W. Bush, speech at National Defense University, March 8, 2005, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050308-3.html.

34. Condoleezza Rice, interview with Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, July 12, 2008, http://www.rferl.org/a/Full_Transcript_Of_Interview_With_Condoleezza_Rice/1182521.html.

35. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 171.

36. "Fact Sheet: Strengthening Diplomatic Ties with Saudi Arabia" (press release), The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, May 16, 2008.

37. Barack Obama, speech at Cairo University, June 4, 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09.

38. “Statements by President Obama and His Majesty King Salman of Saudi Arabia” (press release), The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, April 21, 2016, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/21/statements-president-obama-and-his-majesty-king-salman-saudia-arabia.

39. Shirzad Bozorgmehr, Sara Mazloumsaki, and Angela Dewan, “Iran World’s ‘Biggest State Sponsor of Terrorism,’ Mattis Says,” CNN.com, February 4, 2017, http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/04/politics/mattis-iran-us-sanctions-missile/.

40. “Readout of the President’s Meeting with Mohammed bin Salman Abdulaziz Al Saud, Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defense of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia” (press release), The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, March 15, 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/15/readout-presidents-meeting-mohammed-bin-salman-abdulaziz-al-saud-deputy.

41. “Saudi Prince Sees Trump as ‘True Friend’ to Muslims (Full Text),” Bloomberg News, March 14, 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-03-15/saudi-prince-sees-trump-as-true-friend-to-muslims-full-text.

42. For a useful summary of these uncertainties, see Bruce Riedel, “Saudi Arabia Contemplates Trump,” Al-Monitor, November 22, 2016, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/11/saudi-arabia-suprise-trump-obama-relations.html.

43. Al-Nafjan, *The Origins of Saudi-American Relations*, 22.

PART V

US–Middle Eastern Relations After 9/11

What is the root source of enmity for Middle Eastern groups in relation to the United States? This question is fundamental to understanding America's interactions with the region. How it is answered goes a long way in discerning why others act the way they do toward the United States, as well as determining which policies are most appropriate in advancing US interests.

Unfortunately, no consensus on this critical issue exists among either leaders or analysts; on the contrary, it is intensely contested. On one side of the debate are those who characterize enmity to the United States primarily as a reaction to particular US policies that have negatively impacted the welfare of numerous people throughout the Middle East. These policies have included the frequent projection of US power (from limited, if frequent, drone strikes all the way up to war), which has resulted in the cumulative deaths of thousands of innocents; the significant military and economic support of highly repressive regimes, which makes the United States complicit in the oppression of peoples; and one-sided support of Israel in its disputes with neighbors, which implicates the United States in imperialist policies. It is the hostility created by these actions, say some analysts, that is the principal cause of the ill will directed at the United States, from very low public approval ratings throughout the Islamic world all the way up to terrorist attacks and state enmity.

If this interpretation of outcomes is correct, the prescriptions for improving America's security are clear: US leaders must change their policies in fundamental ways.[1] Instead of forward defense and the frequent use of force, the United States should significantly reduce its military footprint in favor of "offshore balancing" policies, a grand strategy that calls for the United States to minimize its overseas military commitments and depend on local actors to counter regional threats, while simultaneously relying more extensively on soft-power instruments such as developmental aid. Moreover, with less need to project military force, authoritarian allies become less valuable, which would increase US leverage for reforms that enhance basic rights. This is a "less is more" approach to US foreign policy, in which less military activism will result in more favorable views of the United States and ultimately more security. Advocates of this position recommend that, concurrent with these changes, the United States take a much more balanced position in the Arab-Israeli disputes, especially pushing for a two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict.

At the other end of the "why do they hate us" debate are those who attribute US enmity with various groups in the Middle East primarily to the effects of ideological differences. Most members of this camp do not deny that US policies, especially those described above, frequently result in increased levels of hostility. Nevertheless, these analysts assert that the nature of enmity toward the United States cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the ideological relationships among actors. Three principal reasons lead to this conclusion.[2] First, views of the United States often vary starkly by ideological beliefs, including among different powerful ideological groups within the same state, such as Kemalists and Islamists in Turkey or hard-line and liberalizing Islamists in Iran. If different ideological groups in the same country at the same time possess very different views of the United States and advocate opposing policies toward it, US actions cannot be the principal source of these views because US policies are identical for all members of the same state.

Second, and building on this last point, various illiberal groups in the Middle East often view America's Middle Eastern policies as threatening because of their ideological impact, specifically the perceived subversive effects that US actions are likely to have on their state and society. Without the fear of subversion and the stimulation of ideological change in other countries, many of America's friendlier actions—such as increased trade, developmental aid, and liberal international travel and education policies—would not be perceived as very threatening. Indeed, liberalizing groups in Muslim-majority countries have often welcomed some of the same policies that illiberals have decried.

Third, groups that are highly hostile to the United States frequently attribute aggressive actions by the United States to the effects of ideological calculations, namely America's ideological (and thus permanent) hostility to Islam. In this view, American policies are rooted in an ideological foundation and thus are unlikely to change, making the anticipation of continued conflict virtually inevitable.

An ideology-based understanding of enmity toward the United States creates very different policy recommendations for US leaders than those the competing camp typically prescribe. To those with this perspective, the adoption of more-accommodating policies is unlikely to end the state of enmity with America's fiercest ideological opponents, such as hard-liners in Iran, the Islamic State, and al-Qa'ida. These groups are likely to perceive even seemingly friendly policies adopted by the United States, such as economic development and exchange, as highly threatening because of their subversive impact. Moreover, because hard-liners tend to believe that the ideological foundations of US policies are immovable, cooperative actions by US leaders are likely to be dismissed as tricks or ephemeral. Thus, instead of reciprocating US cooperation and restraint, hard-line ideological opponents of the United States are likely to view such actions as opportunities to be exploited. This does not mean that more-reassuring, friendlier policies will never improve America's image or security, only that they are likely to persuade only some ideological groups.

All the chapters in this section address, to varying degrees, the fundamental debate concerning the root sources of conflict and cooperation with the United States. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad's chapter provides a forceful defense of the position that US policies are the fundamental cause of Islamists' enmity toward it. In an attempt to understand the Islamist perspective toward the United States, Haddad analyzes the core causes of Islamism in general, discussing the effects of disempowerment, the denial of self-determination, US hypocrisy due to the frequent violation of its principles, and Israel. Haddad does not paint a very optimistic picture for the future, indicating that continued conflict in the Middle East is likely unless certain long-standing grievances held by many groups in the region are addressed.

Mark Haas and Daveed Gartenstein-Ross offer a different perspective, arguing that hostility to the United States is in key instances rooted in the effects of ideological differences. In Chapter 18, Haas discusses how ideological variables were critical to Iranian leaders' views and policies toward the United States during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama presidencies. Iranian reformers/liberalizers were consistently much less threatened and more supportive of the United States than were Iranian ideological hard-liners. These differences were exhibited in key issues, including views on developing nuclear weapons. The major policy differences among various ideological factions created significant opportunities for the advancement of American interests; however, Haas argues, US leaders frequently have not taken advantage of these openings.

It is impossible, according to Daveed Gartenstein-Ross (Chapter 19), to understand al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State without taking into account the Salafi-jihadist ideology of their leaders. This ideology is critical to the determination of core objectives and understanding of the key threats to these goals. US policymakers underestimate the importance and the transnational appeal of this belief system at their peril. Gartenstein-Ross also argues that al-Qa'ida today is in a very strong position, contrary to conventional wisdom. Western analysts frequently underestimated this group's ability to exploit the opportunities created in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings, as well as how it could pivot off of the Islamic State's extreme brutality to win over some Muslims based on population-centered and comparatively more restrained tactics.

In Chapter 20, Henri Barkey adopts a middle approach to understanding the root sources of conflict and cooperation in his analysis of the US-Turkey relationship. He discusses how both US policies and ideological developments have at different times solidified and strained relations. After surveying the post–World War II history of the relationship, Barkey describes the close strategic cooperation that developed between Washington and Ankara as a result of the Gulf War and the sanctions regime implemented thereafter against Iraq. This strategic cooperation was strengthened after the events of 9/11, when Turkey became vitally important to US strategic interests in Central Asia and the Middle East in the fight against Islamic extremism. The relationship suffered a setback in 2003 when Istanbul, fearing domestic backlash, would not allow the United States to use its territory to launch the invasion of Iraq. The Arab Spring uprisings were a major catalyst for the renewal of close relations as US leaders hoped that Turkey would be a model of democratic reform throughout the region. Differences over the Syrian civil war (with Turkey sometimes supporting hard-line Islamist rebels) and increasing authoritarianism in Turkey have resulted in renewed tensions with the United States, though a break in relations remains unlikely.

The section concludes with a chapter by Mark Haas that explores the potential costs and benefits for the United States created by mass political protests in the region, most notably those experienced during the Arab Spring era. After describing US leaders' initial reactions to the Arab Spring uprisings, the chapter explores how the toppling of authoritarian governments could potentially harm and benefit US interests, and what US leaders can do to maximize the benefits and minimize the harm. Central to this discussion is an analysis of the effects that US policies and ideological calculations have had on relationships. The United States, Haas concludes, is unfortunately more likely in the short run to reap the costs than the benefits created by the overthrow of authoritarians in the region. Consequently, US leaders are likely to continue to support these types of regimes, despite appeals from both those who highlight the backlash created by these policies and those who want to see US liberal ideology spread.

Although the Donald Trump administration is in its infancy, most of the chapters in this section provide some analysis and/or speculation about the nature of US relations in the Middle East under this president. In the epilogue to this book, we look at three revealing key trends in the Trump administration's early dealings with the Middle East and how they are likely to become enduring features of this administration's Middle East policy.

Notes

1. See, for example, Christopher Layne, "America's Middle East Grand Strategy After Iraq: The Moment for Offshore Balancing Has Arrived," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (January 2009), 5–25.

2. For details and examples, see Mark L. Haas, *The Clash of Ideologies: Middle Eastern Politics and American Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 276–280.

CHAPTER 17

ISLAMIST PERCEPTIONS OF US POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad

Many different views and perspectives are represented under the rubric of Islamism. It is currently popular in Western scholarship to distinguish between the mainline Muslim Brotherhood on one side and on the other, Islamic groups such as al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya, al-Takfir wa al-Hijra, al-Jihad, and al-Qutbiyyun in Egypt, Hamas of Palestine, and Hizbollah of Lebanon. These Islamic groups are generally referred to as militants, extremists, or terrorists, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates in other Arab countries, such as the Islamic Action Front of Jordan and Jam'iyyat al-Islah of Kuwait, are perceived as more moderate and willing to participate in the democratic process.

Ahmad Kamal Abu al-Magd, a former cabinet member in the regime of Anwar Sadat in Egypt, distinguishes between five groups seeking Islamization. The first call themselves the Salafiyyun and are noted for their inflexible adherence to the classical teachings of Islam, leaving little room for modern reinterpretation.[1] The second group is the Sufis, who emphasize the spiritual dimension of Islam and focus their efforts exclusively on seeking a spiritual revival. The third group carries the banner of Islam but is in total rebellion against the prevailing Muslim condition. Attempting to move beyond Islam, they are nonetheless eager to hang on to Islamic slogans. The fourth group consists of several movements adamant in their demand for the reinstitution of Islamic law *(shari'a)* as the constitution of the state. For them, the control of political power is the most effective way to work for Islam. The fifth group that al-Magd identifies is composed of the moderate majority who believe in the use of reason in applying the teachings of Islam as a guide for life.[2]

Although all Islamists appear to agree on an agenda of bringing about the kinds of changes that provide empowerment and well-being for Muslim society, they differ on the means of actualizing change and on issues of political and religious pluralism in an Islamic state. Meanwhile, there is general agreement among Islamists and secularists that US foreign policy in the Middle East has been skewed in favor of Israel since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (also known as the Six-Day War, or June War). This perception has left an indelible mark on Islamist identity and its worldview. This chapter analyzes these perceptions and the Islamist response. It is based on Islamist literature, which is polemical on the Palestinian self-rule question and generally hostile toward Israel and US foreign policy. Illustrations used in this chapter are taken mainly from Islamist journals, newspapers, and other publications and are supplemented with interviews I conducted with Islamists in Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Tunisia, and the United States.

ISLAMISM: A REACTION TO DISEMPOWERMENT

Islamism is not a reactionary movement; it does not want to replicate the Islamic community of the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century. Rather, it seeks control of the present and future of Muslim destiny.[3] From its inception it has been reactive, responding to direct and imagined challenges posed by internal conditions as well as its violent encounter, during the past two centuries, with a dominant West, which has insisted that the only universal values worth adhering to are those developed in the West during the Renaissance and the scientific revolution and embodied in rational, liberal, or Marxist thought. Its ideologues operate with a heightened awareness of the importance of monitoring events in the world, particularly those that affect their lives, and responding to them. They see themselves as manning a defensive operation, the responsibility of which is to safeguard society from total disintegration.[4]

Islamism was initially a reaction to a sense of internal decay in Muslim society. A central theme in most Islamist literature is a response to the deep awareness of Muslim backwardness, a critical assessment of what went wrong historically, and an effort to rectify the situation in order to bring about a vibrant future. Revival is seen by its advocates as a crucial means of infusing life into a community that is bogged down in centuries-old ideas and traditions that have led to the ossification of Islamic society, restricting its ability to adapt to the fast-changing reality of the modern world. The revivalists produced a literature that portrayed Islam as a forward-looking, creative, and open ideology receptive to movement and change. They sought to remove the shackles of Islamic society, freeing it from the constraints of past values and interpretations. Their goal was to initiate involvement in the unfolding history of the world, taking control of the lives of their constituency and participating in shaping the future. A unified community was seen as an essential component of this venture.

The challenge of modernity to the prevailing Islamic system arrived already formulated and fully developed, in an alien environment where a different set of issues was being addressed. Westernizers, both indigenous and foreign, perceived European models as prefabricated systems that were transferable and ready for borrowing and implementation because they had worked in the West; hence they advocated liberalism, secularism, and socialism. Since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war there has been a growing perception that imported Western ready-made models of development and modernization, touted as instant solutions for domestic and foreign problems, have failed to bring about the results hoped for by advocates. More importantly, they are perceived to have failed even in the West.

Islamism is a reaction to the denial of the right of self-determination. The lack of democratic institutions and the absence of governments that operate under the law and for the well-being of the people in the region are increasingly identified as major causes of backwardness. Islamist leader Tawfiq Muhammad al-Shawi of Egypt, for example, identifies such specifics as the following: the lack of freedom of determination (the right to choose the ruler) on the part of the polity and the lack of accountability on the part of the ruler; the fact that the *shari'a* has been replaced in most countries by laws legislated by governments; the separation of the law from government, that is, the replacing of an independent jurisprudence by a European model in which "law is the will of the state"; and the loss of a comprehensive unity, a by-product of Western efforts to divide and conquer.[5]

Islamism is a reaction against disempowerment and what is seen as the irrelevance of the nation-states created in the region as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement constructed during World War I, through which the British and the French artificially divided much of the Middle East into spheres of influence that were later sanctioned through postwar agreements into the mandate system consisting of state units that had hitherto not existed. There is general consensus in Islamist literature that the dominant world order that has prevailed since the nation-states in the area were carved out has not allowed for the inclusion of Arabs as full citizens of the world. Arab nations and peoples have continued to be subservient to foreign domination, which Islamists describe as a continuing predatory relationship.[6] Their diagnosis is based on the belief that the core problem is the failure of these nation-states to adhere to the sources of strength in Islam itself that brought about the great and powerful Islamic civilization of the medieval world. In many cases, the analysis goes on to show that the ideology that is supposed to bring about the revival of Muslim society and its potency in the world, although cast in an Islamic idiom, continues to rely on Western standards and values as necessary for that revival.

Islamism is also a reaction to a profound feeling among Muslims that they have been victimized over the centuries at the hands of Western Christians. The litany of perceived outrages includes European treatment of Muslims during the Crusades. They cite the fact that Eastern Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Jerusalem were massacred by the Western invaders during the First Crusade whereas Salah al-Din (Saladin) treated the Crusaders magnanimously by giving them assurance of safe passage after he led the Muslim recapture of the city eighty-eight years later in 1187. It includes the *reconquista* in Spain during which a ruthless de-Islamization policy gave

Muslims the options of conversion, expulsion, or execution. It includes the colonialist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, along with the activities of Christian missionaries. It also includes the reality that Muslims living in the Soviet Union were not allowed to practice their faith or study the tenets of their religion. And it includes the perception that for a century, Zionism has been one more element of the long and continuous effort supported by Christians to eradicate Islam and Muslims from the holy places. Bosnia and Kosovo are seen as further manifestations of European efforts to eradicate the indigenous European Muslim population.[7]

Along these lines, Islamists perceive Christian missionary activity as designed to separate Muslims from Islam. These efforts are believed to have been inspired by the long history of Christian fanaticism against Islam, culminating in the commissioning of missionaries to march under the banner of Christ into Muslim countries in order to convert them. The legacy of missionary sermons and speeches (now translated into Arabic) provides a rich illustration of the accuracy of this perception. For example, it has been noted that although there had been concern over the Jewish danger, the Bolshevik menace, and the yellow peril, Islam posed the greater danger since it alone is capable of expanding and forming a wall against imperialist interests.[8]

Islamism is a reaction to the demonization of Islam. Muslims are offended and angered at the way in which Islam has been defamed in inflammatory political statements, such as former US vice president Dan Quayle's comparison of Islamic fundamentalism to Nazism and communism,[9] and statements supporting Zionist interests in popular novels, such as Leon Uris's *The Hajj.*[10] Islamists are very aware that since the late 1970s there has been a dramatic increase in the number of articles in the US press dedicated to Muslim bashing. They tend to depict Muslims as irrational and vengeful and motivated by religious zeal and fanaticism that arise out of an innate hatred of the West, its Judeo-Christian heritage, and its secularist values. For Muslims, among the most infuriating statements was the 1990 Jefferson Lecture on "Islamic fundamentalism" by prominent Arab historian Bernard Lewis, which generated a heated response from many sources.[11] Islamists observe that Lewis identified historical and cultural differences as the causes of Muslim anger, completely ignoring the specific policies and actions of Western nations that foster the perception among Muslims that as long as the lives of Westerners are not at stake, fairness does not matter. One Muslim author wrote: "His twenty-six-page address was remarkable for the absence of the word 'Israel.' Nor was any mention made of the United States support of the Zionist state, which inflames Muslim passions worldwide. Any US diplomat who has served in a Muslim country or taken even a cursory glance at Muslim media can verify this feeling."[12] Since 9/11, American officials as well as evangelical Christian leaders have felt free to demonize Islam. William G. Boyken, deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence and war fighting, recalled his service in Somalia and boasted: "I knew that my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God, and his was an idol." Former attorney general John Ashcroft stated, "Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him . . . while Christianity is a faith in which God sent his Son to die for you." Televangelist Benny Hinn preached: "This is not a war between Arabs and Jews. It is a war between God and the devil." The prominent evangelist Franklin Graham, in an interview on Beliefnet.com, said: "I believe the Qur'an teaches violence. It does not teach peace, it teaches violence." Other religious leaders focused their diatribe on the Prophet Muhammad, inflaming Muslim sentiments worldwide. Jerry Vines, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said, "Muhammad was a demon-possessed pedophile." In September 2002 Pat Robertson commented on *Hannity & Colmes,* "This man Muhammad was an absolute wild-eyed fanatic. He was a robber and brigand." Jerry Falwell, on *60 Minutes* on October 6, 2002, stated, "I think Muhammad was a terrorist."

Such distorted presentations of Islam are seen by Muslims as conscious efforts at revisionist history, inspired by contempt for Islam or motivated by political considerations in an attempt to maintain unwavering US support for Israel. They tend to validate for Islamists their perceptions that the West has a double standard by which it measures events in the area.

Islamism is increasingly a reaction to what is perceived as Western and Zionist fears of Islam. Although the theme of the "threat of Islam" may have been manufactured for Western political reasons, it provides a useful tool in recruiting young Muslims into the fold.[13] The "mighty" West and Israel, which have humiliated and subjugated Muslim nations, claim that they fear nothing but Islam. If the oppressors know the source of strength, they ask, when will the Muslims awake?[14]

Islamism is a reaction to Zionism. Israel's 1967 preemptive strike, which resulted in a devastating defeat of Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, is generally referred to as *'udwan,* or aggression. Its policies are perceived as Judaizing and aimed at disempowering, dispossessing, and displacing the Palestinians in an effort to destroy their identity. What is perceived as its persistent rejection of United Nations resolutions and violation of the Geneva Convention have fostered, nursed, and inflamed the Islamic response. It is enhanced by what is seen to be US intervention at the United Nations in support of these policies, which has made the international community ineffective in implementing resolutions that would uphold justice.[15] Israeli justifications for the confiscation of property as its divine right and Western silence regarding these activities elicited a response from Abdullah Kannun, a noted North African author and a member of the Higher Council of Islamic Research of al-Azhar, that is typical among Islamists. Advocating the Islamization of the conflict, he affirmed that although the Arabs are the protectors of Palestine, the land belongs to all Muslims. Consequently Muslims must be aware of the connection between Zionism and the kind of Christian religious zealotry that was experienced earlier by the Muslims during the Crusades: "The Palestinian issue is an Islamic, not only an Arab issue. Zionism is the stepdaughter of imperialism *(rabibat al-isti'mar).* Imperialism is the hidden image of the Crusades undertaken by Western Christians against the Muslims of the East."[16]

On another level Islamism can be said to be a kind of mirror image of Zionism. It may be seen as an attempt to emulate what is perceived as a winning Israeli formula in which religious zeal, divine justification, scriptural proof-texting, and victimization are employed to mobilize Jewish as well as Euro-American Christian support for the state. For some Muslim observers, the essence of the issue is that the state of Israel is a Jewish state. "Zionism is therefore the means of the Jewish religion to realize itself, a means of the Jewish people to create their unity in confrontation with all others in the region," says Kamil al-Baqir, a leading Islamist.[17] The question thus remains: Why is it acceptable for Jews to have a Jewish state and not for Muslims to form an Islamic state? Islamist leader Abdullah Kannun notes that the "educated, civilized West is not ashamed to boast of its Christianity, to explain Zionism in its religious context, and to support it by quotations from the Bible, but the ignorant, underdeveloped East is ashamed to call for an Islamic revenge."[18]

ISLAMISM AND THE "DOUBLE STANDARD"

Islamism is a reaction to what is perceived as the double standard *(al-izdiwajiyya)* that is used by the West in its foreign policy in the Middle East. For example, in demonizing the Islamists, Westerners claim that there is no room for religion in the modern nation-state.[19] Islamists consider this hypocritical in light of Western support for Israel and enduring and prominent symbols of religiosity in the West, and they believe that it proves the double standard. Hence they believe that the West is not against religion per se but against Islam. "Pakistan and Israel," says one writer, "are two countries created solely on the basis of religion and faith. But you may read in the Western press that Pakistan is backward and reactionary because it has emerged in the name of religion. Nothing whatsoever of this nature is said about Israel."[20]

There is a growing perception among Islamists that Jews and Christians, driven by religious fanaticism, triumphalism, and imperialism, have been engaged in a "thousand-year war" with Muslims, which the latter are losing because they are not driven "by a parallel religious sentiment in order to repel this fanatic aggression."[21] Major events in the area have contributed to this perception, such as the civil war in Lebanon, which has cast an aura of suspicion on the allegiance of Arab Christians and the efficacy of Arab nationalism; the success of the Iranian revolution, which validated for the faithful the Qur'anic teaching that God will give victory to those who believe; and Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, which were widely perceived as a vindication of the projected Islamist worldview that blamed "the problem of Israel" on Western bigotry and religious fanaticism and were seen as a continuation of the Crusader-Zionist efforts to destroy Islam.[22]

Muslims have been intrigued by the fact that Israel and its supporters boast that it is the only democracy in the area. They note that it functions as a democracy "for Jews" while denying religious minorities—both Christian and Muslim—equal access to resources such as water,[23] housing,[24] health, education,[25] jobs, and the ability to purchase land. Some go so far as to argue that Israel's actions have been devoid of any compassion or human values.[26] The former executive secretary of Islamic Jihad in Palestine, Fathi Shikaki, said in an interview, "I would ask them how they could talk about justice, democracy, and human rights while a methodical process of genocide has been taking place for decades against the Palestinian people."[27]

Muslims are very aware of the double standard that comes into play when the US press, members of the academy, and some government officials label Muslims as extremists. They see that the charge of extremism is arbitrary depending on the interest of the accuser. According to Islamist leader 'Abd al-Baqi Khalifa, for example:

"Extremism is ascribed to violent events according to the interests of those who are making the judgement. For example, the war in Afghanistan prior to the Mujahideen was presented by the Soviet media as a war of evil people against the Russians who had come to Afghanistan to develop it and restore security to the area and prevent American domination over it. In the American and Western media it was depicted as a war of liberation undertaken by the Afghan people against an invading army."[28]

Khalifa further notes that the international press is under the influence of the decision makers and acts as their mouthpiece, providing epithets for those they seek to criticize. Thus "the warriors of Abkhazia are separatists, the southerners in Sudan are [liberationists], the demonstrators in Moscow are criminals and in Peking are freedom lovers, the Kurds in Iraq are victims, in Turkey, they are professional criminals. These are the contradictory depictions that have made the word 'extremist' predominantly a kind of political curse word rather than a name for anyone in particular."[29]

Islamists perceive a pronounced discrepancy between professed US values and US actions; that justice, self-determination, and human rights appear to be victims of national interest; that in the last analysis "might makes right"; and that Muslims are rendered weak *(mustadh'afun)* by the empowerment of Israel. Aware of the enormity of the Holocaust and of European-Christian guilt for the sins of Nazism and anti-Semitism, they still question why Western society found a way to expiate those sins at the cost of Palestinian-Christian and Muslim lives. They note that the Ecumenical Council convened by the pope asked Christians to stop cursing Jews in the Catholic Church and that the World Council of Churches absolved the Jews from the historical events that led to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Yet, they ask, why is this the fault of the Muslims? Why, they ask, should the Arabs of Palestine pay the price for this error by the church with their homeland, their dignity, their present, and their future?[30] "When various churches compete to please Israel and flatter the Jews, does this point to anything but that the religious leaders have sold their conscience to Satan? . . . The Arabs [of Palestine] are threatened by general extinction, their homes are blown up, their villages eradicated from existence, and still [their efforts at] self defense are considered a crime and an insurrection. . . . This dreadful tribulation is bound to awaken sleeping Islam."[31]

ISLAMISTS AND THE ZIONIST LOBBY

Islamist literature depicts the West as dominated by the Zionist lobby. This image has had several mutations as Zionist influence is perceived to have gained control of the inner circles of policymakers who determine the destiny of the region. Interviews I conducted with Islamists in Egypt in 1985 made clear that they resented the double standard with which they were treated. One leader talked about the "evenhanded" policy, which was then the buzzword used by the administration to describe the habit of the West "to stroke Israel with the palm of their hand and whack us with the back." That same year, the joke in Jordan was, Why doesn't Israel want to become the fifty-first state of the United States? The answer: It would then have to be satisfied with being represented by two senators whereas now it has one hundred.

In interviews I conducted in 1989, the image of Zionist control of the US government became even more dominant. One Islamist depicted the United States as a colony of Israel (a view that is shared by Arab secularists). He compared the state of affairs in the United States with the former British rule over Egypt, noting that there were three specific areas in which British power manifested itself. First, Egyptians were not allowed to have an independent foreign policy but had to defer to Britain for direction. Second, there were foreign British residents in Cairo who made sure that Egyptian policy was in accord with the interests of Britain. Third, Egyptian tax revenues were sent to Britain to sustain its power. He drew the parallels by concluding, "What you have in the United States is a government that is unable to formulate an independent foreign policy without first asking how will Israel react. Secondly, the Congress is accountable to the Israeli lobby, which functions as a foreign agent placing the welfare of Israel above that of the United States. In the third place, the lobby assures the flow of billions of US tax dollars to Israel."

Unwavering support for the state of Israel in the US Congress is taken for granted by Islamists. Members of Congress were seen as fearful of losing their jobs if they questioned unqualified support for Israel. By being thus silenced, Congress was seen by Islamists as sanctioning acts of violence by Israel as well as supporting Israeli policies, through routine funding, of "dehumanizing" the Palestinian people. This did great damage to US credibility. One Egyptian Islamist referred to the "hostages on the Hill" in reference to the US Congress. The image has not improved. The influence of the Zionist lobby is perceived as being unprecedented in US history. With the ascendancy in the Bill Clinton administration of Martin Indyk, a former Zionist lobbyist who is perceived as supporting Likud policies, to the National Security Council in charge of US policy in the region, some Islamists referred to the "Israeli-occupied White House."[32] The election of George W. Bush did not bring about the hoped-for rectification in American foreign policy; rather, it ushered in the power of the neoconservatives, who are decidedly pro-Israeli.

US FOREIGN POLICY AND THE GEORGE W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION

Muslims expected a more equitable policy from the George W. Bush administration. During the presidential debates, he had questioned the use of racial profiling legislated by the Clinton administration, which had targeted Arab Americans. Furthermore, in the estimation of Arab and Muslim Americans, a change in administration would remove the Israeli lobby from the center of policymaking. They had noted that the lobby was instrumental in defeating the reelection bid of George W. Bush's father (because it did not forgive his policy of demanding a halt to the construction and expansion of settlements on the West Bank). Consequently George W. received the endorsement of the major Muslim and Arab organizations, and a large number of Arabs and Muslims in the United States registered and voted for the first time, accounting for 2 percent of the votes received by the Bush-Cheney ticket. Muslims believe that their votes were the decisive margin in Florida. They had not paid attention to the promises he had made to the Zionist lobby. He was later to boast that he had borrowed twenty policy wonks from the American Enterprise Institute, noted as the home of neoconservatives and unconditional supporters of Israel.[33] In essence, while the Clinton administration relied on Zionists with connections to the Labor Party in Israel, the Bush administration utilized those who had a long-standing relationship with Benjamin Netanyahu of Likud.

From the beginning, President Bush wanted to keep his hands off the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the process, he allowed the Israeli authorities to continue to grind down the Palestinian resistance to the occupation. His public and highly publicized refusal to meet with Yasser Arafat, while repeatedly welcoming Prime Minister Sharon to the White House, sent an important message to Islamists that he was in total support of Israel and its policies. Whenever the Palestinians reacted to Israeli aggression, Bush blamed Arafat and the Palestinians. Such open support of Sharon infuriated Muslims and Arabs overseas; Sharon was particularly reviled because he was implicated in four massacres perpetrated against the Palestinians. They were particularly aggrieved when Bush met with Sharon after the Israeli shelling and demolition in Ramallah around the headquarters of Yasser Arafat. Bush had earlier expressed his frustration by saying, "Enough is enough," which led some to believe that he was finally disgusted enough to restrain what was perceived to be Israeli aggression. But upon meeting with Sharon, Bush declared him a "man of peace." This led the moderate Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat to say, "When I hear the president saying that Sharon is a man of peace after he has destroyed our way of life, and after the Jenin refugee camp, I don't know if this is not a reward for Israeli terrorism against the Palestinian people."[34]

Another policy adopted early in the Bush administration that aggravated Islamists was its refusal to engage in a discussion of what was perceived to be Israeli racial policies. Their anger was demonstrated in Muslim publications all over the world when the United States and Israel walked out of the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance held in Durban, accusing participants that the conference had been "hijacked" by Israel's enemies. For Islamists that fact demonstrated once again America's lack of concern for Palestinians under what is perceived to be an oppressive Israeli occupation that openly discusses means of containing Palestinians within fences, transferring them to other countries, or getting rid of them because they do not fit into its definition of a Jewish state. One Islamist asked, "If this is not racism, what is?"

And then there was the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Virginia, and Americans asked, "Why do they hate us?" Osama bin Laden's statement provided an answer that few US policymakers wanted to hear. He identified US foreign policy vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict; US containment of Iraq, which had degraded the lives of the Iraqi people and led to their suffering; and US troops stationed in the Gulf, who maintained American hegemony in the area and supported autocratic regimes. His message was blunted by a parade of former US policymakers, diplomats, and army brass who appeared on American television stations around the clock to assure the American public that they hate us because of our "democracy," our "culture," and our "values." And as Raghida Dergham of the Lebanese daily *al-Hayat* has said, not one dared to tell the American people that "it is the policy, stupid." The Arabs who perpetrated the horrible terrorist acts in the United

States were suspected of being the same group that had hit American installations of command and control elsewhere: two embassies in Africa, the USS *Cole* in Yemen, and the Khobar Tower in Saudi Arabia, where American troops lived. They had not attacked any of America's cultural monuments—not one Pizza Hut, McDonald's, or cathedral had been bombed. For those who continue to question whether there was any connection between the destruction of 9/11 and our foreign policy, Robert Fisk of the British *Independent* pointed to the fact that the last will of Muhammad Atta, who led the suicide bombers on 9/11, was written on April 18, 1996, the day of the Qana massacre. (On April 18, 1996, the Israeli army during Operation Grapes of Wrath in South Lebanon deliberately targeted the UN headquarters at Qana, which resulted in the massacre of more than one hundred women and children who had taken refuge there.)

After the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration declared a "global war on terrorism." The attack on American soil was so momentous that it was deemed to have "changed America forever." To his credit, President Bush reached out to the Arab and Muslim American communities and assured them that the United States was waging war not against Islam but against terrorism. He called on the American people not to take out their anger and frustration on American Muslims. At the same time, his administration incarcerated more than five thousand Arabs and Muslims using the hastily legislated Patriot Act. Racial profiling of Arabs and Muslims continues to be a common practice. Meanwhile, there was very little movement in adjusting US foreign policy to demonstrate more evenhandedness and justice. The Bush administration was caught in a double bind: if it altered its policies, it could be perceived as caving in to the terrorists; at the same time, the constant blaming of Palestinians for the bloodshed in Israel/Palestine and the daily saber rattling for regime change in Iraq raised questions about US sincerity. The majority of Muslims overseas believed that the United States had declared war on Islam. The administration's policy, implemented by the American diplomatic corps, of trying to root out fundamentalist Islam from textbooks and *madrasas* in Muslim countries has infuriated Islamists. They have questioned what right "Mufti Bush" has to decide what true Islam is. The fact that the administration bombed the Taliban, which had not perpetrated 9/11, and the large number of Afghan civilian casualties raised suspicions that the motive was retribution. No one doubted the United States' might and ability to destroy Islamists, but they reserved the right to think for themselves and to hold their own interpretations of the Qur'an. Many questioned whether the Bush administration's policies were creating a new generation of Islamists who will seek to avenge what they perceive to be a war on Islam, despite the assurances by the Bush administration to the contrary, and they await justice for the Palestinians.

Western commentators point to the fact that various Arab governments appear to have wearied of the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian cause. The Gulf War precipitated an exodus of Palestinians from yet another Arab country, Kuwait, while Operation Iraqi Freedom emptied them out of Iraq. That, however, does not translate into Muslim abandonment of the issue of Palestine and Jerusalem. For Islamists, the danger facing the Muslims is not "the Palestine problem" as much as the "problem of Israel." For Muslims, Palestine is a cause. It represents the demand for the right of a people to self-determination, democracy, and freedom. It is also the demand that the West recognize that an Arab person is equal to a European person or, as some Palestinians put it, that a European Jew is not better than a Palestinian Christian or Muslim and has no superior right to rob, destroy, expel, kidnap, or kill without consequences. Palestine is a demand for the end of the colonial era, an end to the era of "Christian arrogance"[35] and "Jewish insolence,"[36] a demand that the superior international Islamic law prevail, which would guarantee justice and freedom to Muslims and to religious minorities who dwell among them.

Islamists believe that American foreign policy has targeted them as worthy victims for annihilation. They hope that one day the West will wake up to the tragedy it has perpetrated. Those in the West may yet apologize for the destruction of Palestine; they may even offer restitution, but will they ever be able to correct the wrong that they have done? As Rashid Qabbani, the mufti of Lebanon, put it:

> The West has been brilliant in the crime of ridding itself of the Jewish problem and dumping it into the heart of the Arab world by supporting the Zionist entity and [establishing] Israel in Palestine in 1948. After WWII Western nations began seeking forgiveness from Israel for what Nazism had done to the Jews. Will the Western conscious[ness] awake one day to seek forgiveness for the crime which they committed by establishing Israel in Palestine and by evicting the Palestinian people from their homes and land? Will the West seek forgiveness for the suppression, terrorizing, and humiliation that Israel has been meting out for fifty years to the oppressed Palestinian people and for the loss of their land at the hand of the West? Should it occur, of what value will Western apology be? For it is the West that daily provides Israel with the weapons of mass destruction, prepared for the annihilation of the Palestinians and the Arabs.[37]

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

One of the transformations that took place post-9/11 was in President George W. Bush himself, who referred to himself as the "war president."[38] After September 11, 2001, the president proceeded to plan for the invasion of Iraq, a plan promoted by the neoconservative advisers in his administration.[39] In seeking the support of the American people for the global war on terrorism, the Bush administration utilized a variety of tactics, including creating a climate of fear about the alleged imminent danger of a nuclear attack by Saddam Hussein. When these assertions were questioned, then national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, on September 8, 2003, retorted: "The problem here is that there will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."[40] Furthermore, despite the fact that Saddam was a secularist, he was initially depicted as an accomplice of al-Qa'ida. Later he was condemned as a monster who had gassed his own people (even though the biological and chemical weapons are suspected to have been provided by the United States). He could not be trusted with possessing weapons of mass destruction, which he would surely aim at the United States. At the same time, the propaganda for war provided the public with a moral justification for attacking Afghanistan and Iraq, bathing the war in the virtues of, among other things, liberating the oppressed women of Islam from fanatical oppressive Islamists. The goal became the modernization and democratization of Islamic society. Washington eventually promised the refashioning of Iraq as a beacon of democracy that would serve as a model for the entire Middle East.[41]

Muslims took note of the fact that Operation Iraqi Freedom was a preemptive war. From their perspective, there was no virtue in the attack. Although they despised Saddam Hussein, they perceived the goal of the US-led invasion in more sinister terms, as one that was driven by the motive of weakening the Arabs and Muslims and empowering Israel. They accused the Bush administration of dealing with the consequences of terrorism while turning a blind eye toward its causes. Arabs and Muslims are aware that terrorism is a response to American policies that empower autocratic regimes and implement Israeli and Zionist policies that are harmful to Arabs and Muslims and therefore breed hatred. They noted that the US government could not acknowledge this truth since it would indict itself, and therefore it projects the blame on others. Hence the Bush administration declared a global war on terrorism, in which it assumed a total monopoly in deciding the nature of the war, its timing, its targets, the means to be utilized, and the manner in which it would be conducted.[42]

Islamists saw the war in Iraq as a two-pronged attack that utilized military power and media deception. While various spokesmen of the Bush administration boasted about "shock and awe" to neutralize the Iraqi army and pacify the population, Islamists saw the attack as proof of American brutality and addiction to state terrorism in order to gain control of Iraqi oil fields. On Arab television American military tactics looked indistinguishable from those that Israel utilized in the occupied territories. The two occupations appeared to blend into a coordinated attack against Muslims, especially after US rhetoric conflated terrorism against the United States with resistance to Israeli occupation in Palestine and Lebanon. "Shock and awe" did not cow Arabs and Muslims; rather, it inflamed their passions against the West and its supporters, a sentiment that spawned a large number of volunteers for the insurgency. The American media was perceived by Muslims as assuming the role of the self-censoring and embedded servant of hegemonic imperialist goals that "have no association with freedom or democracy."[43]

While a great deal of ink has been spilled discussing the war, its motives, goals, and conduct, two focuses of Islamist literature are worth noting: the growing rejection of violence as a tactic to achieve the goals of the Islamic movement and the continued rejection of perceived US schemes to bring the Muslim world under its cultural hegemony and to empower Israel over the Arabs and Muslims.

Several Islamist leaders have published *shari'a*-based interpretations that denounce terrorist bombings targeting civilians. They have also expressed their opinion that these bombings are based on a misinterpretation of Islamic teaching and have been counterproductive and therefore against the interests of Islam. The renunciation of violence by these Islamic groups was not a consequence of the demonstration of

American resolve and power, whether in Afghanistan or in Iraq. For example, the Jama'ah Islamiyya, which was responsible for the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, renounced violence on July 5, 1997. They called for the cessation of armed operations and the shedding of blood as a means of achieving the goal of Islamizing society. This declaration was signed by its leadership and approved by Sheikh Omar 'Abd al-Rahman from his prison cell in the United States. The group split, and some of those who refused to subscribe to peaceful resistance perpetrated the terrorist activities in the late 1990s in Luxor, Upper Egypt, while others joined al-Qa'ida.[44]

This literature notes that violence has been counterproductive and has not achieved its goals. Hijacking airplanes has not put a stop to air travel in the world. Nor has targeting a bank eliminated the banking industry or kept people from dealing with banks. Likewise, bombings are not going to force the United States to alter its policies. Rather, violence has brought great injury to the cause and goals of the Islamic movement because it has led to the identification of jihad with terrorism, an interpretation promoted by many Israelis and the Americans as a way to delegitimate resistance movements in Palestine and Lebanon as well as in Chechnya and Iraq. Israeli and American rhetoric depicts all resistance as terrorism and asserts that "all Muslims are terrorists, the word Islam means terror, all are engaged in killing civilian women and children."[45] Thus some Islamist leaders have concluded that "*jihad* for the sake of *jihad,* fighting for the sake of fighting is the wrong model of *jihad.* It is an erroneous interpretation of this great Islamic duty."[46] This view contends that American aggression should not legitimate what is against the Islamic *shari'a,* the killing of innocent people. America's crimes against Arabs and Muslims are evident and cause a great deal of grieving; however, they should not be used as an excuse to weaken the *'umma* or provide the United States with an excuse to interfere in the internal affairs of Arabs and Muslims.[47]

The literature admits that the perpetrators are right that the US treatment of Muslims is laced with arrogance and contempt, evident in the legislation passed by Congress as the Sudan Peace Act,[48] the Iraq Liberation Act,[49] and the Syria Accountability Act,[50] while four hundred congressmen voted in support of a resolution to not put pressure on Israel to implement the Road Map, which would bring about the creation of a Palestinian state—despite the fact that the Road Map, from its inception to its final formulation, was an Israeli project.[51] It is also evident in the treatment of prisoners of war in Afghanistan, detainees at the prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, and those held at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. This treatment is seen in the Arab and Muslim worlds as an example of America's disdain for human rights as well as international conventions.[52] Islamists saw President Bush as a hypocrite and a liar not only because of the deception about the reasons for the invasion of Iraq but also because of the spin about the noble goals of the invasion. They noted, for example, that in a November 6, 2003, speech at the National Endowment for Democracy, he focused on the theme of democracy in the Muslim world. He commended the leaders of autocratic countries—Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen—but condemned the "Palestinian leaders who block and undermine democratic reform."[53] But when the Palestinians elected representatives he did not approve of, specifically in the Hamas parliamentary victory in January 2006, Bush sanctioned the blockade of the freely elected Palestinian government, which was intended to starve it into submission.

Another peeve was the promotion by the Bush administration of the Greater Middle East Partnership project, which was perceived to be an American political strategy to abrogate the Arab identity by adding far-flung Muslim nations under a new geographic umbrella.[54] The term *Middle East* was designed by colonial powers. Its geographic reach has always been elastic and flexible, determined by Western interests. In earlier times it had included Iran, Turkey, and Cyprus, but the greater Middle East had an even larger reach. To Islamists, its goal appeared to be the eradication of the Arab identity. They would become Middle Easterners instead of Arabs. Some perceived it as a reincarnation of an old project to refashion the Arab nations according to Western dictates and Israeli design. The idea had first been floated by Shimon Peres, former prime minister of Israel, by which he depicted the Middle East at peace, with Israel managing the area's resources and controlling its trade.[55]

Islamists remained suspicious of the Bush administration's goals in Iraq. They maintained that under the rubric of pluralism and democracy, the American government appeared to be in the process of dividing the country according to ethnic and sectarian identities. They noted that the record of the US occupation did not inspire hope. It was accused of insisting on giving US companies the right to develop the oil industry, robbing the Iraqis of their wealth. It was also accused of initially placing shady characters in charge of the Iraqi government, of allowing the theft of archeological treasures, and of subverting the intellectual and religious culture of Iraq by replacing the school curriculums with materials conceived and written in the United States.[56]

Suspicion of American motives is pervasive in the Muslim world. The fear is that the globalization promoted by the United States will result in the Americanization of Arab and Muslim culture. This Americanization can be imposed through "shock and awe" if necessary, with total disregard for any freedom of choice or democratic input by Muslims.[57] The hope in the Arab and Muslim worlds is that Americans will recognize that the international order that was unilaterally abrogated by the United States must be restored. The hope is that the American people will initiate that change.[58]

ISLAMISTS AND THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

The Arab and Muslim world welcomed the election of Barack Obama to the presidency of the United States with cautious optimism, anticipating a new era in American policy toward the Middle East. They had by the end of the Bush presidency been convinced that the United States had declared war on Islam and Muslims. They resented the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that precipitated the deaths of thousands of civilians. They were outraged by the torture of prisoners in Guantanamo prison and by the support of Israeli confiscation and colonization of Palestinian lands and the building of walls that held the population on the West Bank in what appeared to be open-air prison. The Bush administration ended with what was perceived as a savage war by Israel on Gaza that targeted its population and their houses, hospitals, schools, and food. Muslims and Arabs were ready for change.

Ahmed Yousef, the chief political adviser to Hamas in Gaza, was quoted during the 2008 election campaign as saying, "We hope he (Obama) will (win)."[59] Noting Obama's public disavowal of former president Carter's plans to meet with Hamas without preconditions, Yousef said: "I understand American politics. This is the season for elections and everybody tries to be, sound like he is a friend of Israel."[60] Obama later made a speech before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Washington, DC, and argued that Israel's security was "sacrosanct" and that Israel should remain a "Jewish State."[61] The most controversial part was Obama's assertion that in "any agreement with the Palestinian people . . . Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it must remain undivided."[62] A four-minute video highlighting Obama's pro-Israel statements and featuring an "Obama Loves Israel" photo montage was compiled and distributed through the Internet.[63] The goodwill expressed by Yousef changed to disappointment: "[Obama's] remarks on Jerusalem cast doubt over the chances of peace. . . . We reject the positions of Barack Obama because they are in contradiction with the traditional positions of the United States which considers that East Jerusalem is under occupation."[64]

Upon taking office, President Obama announced a new initiative toward Muslim nations. Two days following his inauguration, he signed three executive orders regarding Guantanamo. The first established that prisoners of war would henceforth be "treated humanely and shall not be subjected to violence to life and person (including murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture), nor to outrages upon personal dignity (including humiliating and degrading treatment)" while in detention under the authority of "the United States Government."[65] The second executive order provided that the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay would be closed "as soon as practicable, and no later than 1 year from the date of this order."[66] Furthermore, it ordered that five hundred of the eight hundred prisoners detained at Guantanamo Bay were entitled to a review of their files and could be released or transferred to a third-party country.[67] The third executive order established the creation of a special task force whose mission was to "conduct a comprehensive review of the lawful options available . . . with respect to the apprehension, detention, trial, transfer, release, or other disposition of individuals captured or apprehended in connection with armed conflicts and counterterrorism operations."[68] Despite the order to close Guantanamo Bay, the facility remained open at the end of Obama's presidency.

President Obama made other symbolic gestures toward the Middle East and Muslim world by delivering two major speeches, one in Istanbul (April 6, 2009) and the other in Cairo (June 4, 2009). The Cairo speech, in particular, was well received by moderate Islamists[69] and viewed with cautious optimism by right-leaning Islamists.[70] Khalid Mishaal of Hamas in an interview with *Time* magazine moments after the speech said: "Undoubtedly Obama spoke a new language. His speech was cleverly designed. . . . The essence of the speech was to improve the US image and to placate the Muslims. We don't mind either objective, but we are looking for more than just mere words. If the United States wishes to open a new page, we definitely would welcome this. We are keen to contribute to this. But we [believe that cannot happen] merely with words. It must be with deeds, by changing the policy on the ground."[71]

This sentiment was shared by Fadel Soliman, director of the Bridges Foundation and Islamic *da'wa* activist, in a piece published in *Al-Ahram Weekly*: "Visits and verbal messages do not bring change, but rather real work does."[72]

While the Obama administration changed several Bush policies, it failed to deliver any meaningful results on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the primary source of Muslim rage. The administration appeared unable to rein in the Israeli campaign to confiscate and colonize more Palestinian land by escalating the construction of more settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem. For instance, while it publicly demanded that Israel cease the construction of additional settlements in the occupied territories, it failed to pressure Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to alter his government's policy. This provoked criticism from some Islamists, including Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizbollah, who argued that Obama completely backed Israel. He noted, "We saw how the US withdrew from [the demand to halt settlement construction) and called on the Palestinians to return to the negotiation table with no preconditions. Obama's deception has been exposed sooner than expected."[73]

Nevertheless, relations between the United States and Israel appeared for a while to sour, most notably illustrated following a Netanyahu visit to Washington. It was widely reported that Obama scolded the Israeli prime minister for his settlements stance and for the findings illuminated in the Goldstone Report that determined that Israel perpetrated war crimes during its war on Gaza.[74] Yet the United States publicly supported Israel's rejection of the report. Then, on May 31, 2010, when the Israelis boarded a flotilla of aid ships headed to Gaza and killed nine protesters, including an American citizen, it reinforced the perception that nothing had changed and continued the process of the deteriorating relations between America and the Muslim world.[75] Although Obama and Netanyahu's relationship was often frosty, the US president in September 2016 committed to a record $38 billion, ten-year agreement of military aid to Israel.[76]

Other Middle Eastern policy issues of interest to Islamist groups included the Obama administration's position vis-à-vis Iran, which began with friendly gestures—intended to launch diplomatic talks—but quickly changed into threats of additional economic sanctions through the United Nations. The president, though, in July 2015 did agree to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a groundbreaking accord that committed Iran to limits on its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

Both Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden argued that Obama was no different from Bush, citing his support for Israel, his plan to continue the war in Afghanistan, and his decision to keep Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, a holdover from the Bush administration, in his position.[77] Khalid Mishaal claimed that the Obama administration attempted to intervene in internal Palestinian politics, contending that it tried "to foil Palestinian efforts to achieve the national reconciliation by pressuring Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas not to go ahead with it."[78]

Isam al-Aryan, of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, wrote an article for *al-Akbar* (Beirut) under the title "A Letter to Barack Obama." He urged Obama to refrain from backing authoritarian regimes, lamenting that these regimes had surrendered their sovereignty and interest to outsiders. He also expressed bitterness toward American hypocrisy:

> It is a matter of allegiance to your country when you promote principles that are called upon by the American constitution, and the values of freedom, respect of human rights, democracy and respect of the will of people. By contrast, it is not a matter of allegiance to your country to keep your armies . . . occupying all corners of the world. It is not a matter of faithfulness to your principles to keep those detainees in jail without conviction and extract false confessions from them by torture; and to use tyrants and autocrats who remain in power because of your support.[79]

Most Muslims, in sum, were disappointed that Obama's rhetoric was not matched by hoped-for changes in American foreign policy.

CONCLUSION: THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Based on Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric and policies adopted during the early months of his administration, US relations with Islamists are likely to worsen during this presidency. Whereas Presidents Bush and Obama frequently stressed that the United States was not in a clash-of-civilizations conflict with Islam, but only with a radical perversion of the religion, Trump and some of his closest advisers have blurred this distinction. Although these leaders most frequently condemn "radical" or "extremist" Islam (or related descriptions), the distinction between this categorization and Islamism in general or even Islam is not always maintained. In a March 2016 interview, then-candidate Trump asserted: "I think Islam hates us." When asked if he was referring to "radical Islam," he responded, "It's radical, but it's very hard to define. It's very hard to separate. Because you don't know who's who."[80]

Other members of the Trump administration, including Steve Bannon (President Trump's chief strategist) and former national security adviser Michael Flynn, have made similar statements that obscure the differences between Islam, Islamism, and radical Islamism.[81] In 2014 comments to the Human Dignity Institute in the Vatican, Bannon described the history of the United States' (and Europe's) relationships with Islam in clash-of-civilizations terms: "If you look back at the long history of the Judeo-Christian West struggle against Islam, I believe that our forefathers kept their stance, and I think they did the right thing. I think they kept it out of the world, whether it was at Vienna, or Tours, or other places. . . . [Look at current events] and you will see we're in a war of immense proportions."[82] Given statements such as these, there is a sense in Bannon's views that although "radical" Islamism is the threat, because extremism is created within Islam, the religion itself is a problem that should be countered.[83]

The Trump administration's domestic and international policies reflect these blurred lines among different types of Islamism and even Islam itself. They at times demonstrate a willingness to collectively punish entire communities while risking that the United States will increasingly be viewed as Islamophobic. In December 2015, candidate Trump called for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States" until potential terrorists could be identified.[84] Consistent with this position, the Trump administration has repeatedly attempted to implement a travel ban from six Muslim-majority countries, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen (thus far the bans have been overturned in US courts).

Internationally, the Trump administration has made no distinction among different types of Islamists, such as between Iranian moderates, reformers, and hard-liners in the government, who are likely to have very different views of the United States. Trump administration officials have also heaped praise on authoritarian leaders, such as Egyptian president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, for their crushing of all varieties of Islamists.[85]

The frustration and anger in Muslim populations in the Middle East is likely to remain high as unemployment (especially among younger populations) remains substantial, as democratic institutions continue to be rare, and as a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict becomes increasingly unlikely. The Trump administration's statements and policies will fuel these frustrations, making continued hostilities and conflicts all but inevitable.

Notes

1. For a sampling of Salafi literature, see ʻAbd al-Rahman ʻAbd al-Khaliq, *al-ʼUsul al-ʼIlmiyya li al-Daʼwa al-Salafiyya* (Kuwait, 1982); ʻUmar Sulayman al-Ashqar, *Maʼalim al-Shakhsiyya al-Islamiyya* (Kuwait, 1984). For a criticism of Salafi thought, see Muhammad Fathi ʻUthman, *al-Salafiyya fi al-Mujtamaʼat al-Muʼasira* (Cairo, 1982).

2. Ahmad Kamal Abu al-Magd, *Kitab al-Qawmiyya al-ʼArabiyya wa al-Islam* (Beirut, 1980), 32–33. For a different categorization, see Khurshid Ahmad, "Islam and the New World Order," *Middle East Affairs,* Spring–Summer 1993, 10–11.

3. See Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "The Authority of the Past: Current Paradigms for an Islamic Future," in Toby Siebers, ed., *The Authority of the Past* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities, 1993). For Islamist discussions on the future, see Ahmad Kamal Abu al-Magd, "Al-Muslimun Daʼwa li-Iqtiham al-Mustaqbal," *al-ʼArabi,* March 1983; Fuʼad Muhammad Fakhr al-Din, *Mustaqbal al-Muslimin* (Cairo, 1976); ʻAbd al-ʼAziz Kamil, *al-Islam wa al-Mustaqbal* (Cairo, 1976); ʻAbd al-Halim ʻUways, *al-Muslimun fi Maʼrakat al-Baqaʼ* (Cairo, 1979); Sayyid Qutb, *Islam: The Religion of the Future* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1977).

4. Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Maʼrakat al-Mushaf fi al-ʼAlam al-Islami* (Cairo, 1964); Muhammad al-Hasani, *al-Islam al-Mumtahan* (Cairo, n.d.); Muhammad Farag, *Al-Islam fi Muʼtarak al-Siraʼ al-Fikri al-Hadith* (Cairo, 1962); Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Kifah Din* (Cairo, n.d.); Muhammad Jalal Kishk, *al-Ghazu al-Fikri* (Cairo, 1975); ʻAbd al-Sattar Fathallah Saʼid, *al-Ghazu al-Fikri wa al-Tayyarat al-Muʼadiya li al-Islam* (Cairo, 1977).

5. Tawfiq Muhammad al-Shawi, "Istratijiyya ʻIlmiyya li al-Tayyar al-Islami," *al-Mujtamaʼ,* December 28, 1993, 22.

6. Abdurrahman Abdullah, "The Final Battle for the Soul of Afghanistan," *Inquiry,* June 1992, 19.

7. One author described the minarets of Yugoslavia in the following words: "This remains a living testimony to the glorious and often forgotten Islamic heritage of the last remnants of Europe's indigenous Muslim population, a people, a society, a civilization possibly on the verge of extinction. This is not a fate different from the fate experienced by the indigenous Muslims of Sicily, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Malta, etc. many centuries earlier." Saffet Catovic, "Europe's Islamic Heritage in Jeopardy," *Inquiry*, January 1993, 28.

8. See Ziyad Muhammad 'Ali, *'Ida al-Yahud li al-Haraka al-Islamiyya* (Amman, 1982), 21.

9. Graduation speech at the US Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, May 30, 1990.

10. "We Muslims are very distressed at the growing number of attacks of the Western Jewish American media against Islam. . . . We are prone to think that the Jewish and Zionist groups with all their great influence in the West and America have determined to turn the West against Islam and to push Christianity and Islam into a violent confrontation that will destroy both and keep the Zionists as winners." Ghannushi, interview, *al-Majalla,* December 28, 1993, 28.

11. See Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 20, 1990. Charles Krauthammer reiterates the same ideas in "The New Crescent of Crisis: The Global Intifada," *Washington Post,* February 16, 1990. Cf. Daniel Pipes, "The Muslims Are Coming, the Muslims Are Coming," *National Review,* November 19, 1990, 28–31.

12. Mowahid H. Shah, "A New Cold War Within Islam?," *Christian Science Monitor,* July 30, 1990, 19.

13. In an interview with the first secretary of the US embassy in Qatar, Yusuf al-Qaradawi is reported to have said: "It is not in America's interest to be an enemy of Islam, the Islamic forces and the Islamic movements that are balanced and moderate. However, there are individuals and powers who have an interest in maintaining that Islam is something to fear and revile. They envision for American policy makers and to those in power that Islam is a frightening demon which represents what they call the green threat which they must be cautious of after the passing away of the red Communist threat. This in reality is a myth. For Islam, especially that represented by the moderate groups which we advocate, is not a danger to anyone." *Al-Mujtama',* December 28, 1993, 31.

14. David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, is reported to have said, "We fear nothing but Islam." Yitzhak Rabin reportedly declared, "The religion of Islam is our only enemy." And Shimon Peres warned, "We will not feel secure until Islam puts away its sword." 'Ali, *'Ida,* 45–46.

15. 'Abd al-Hamid al-Sayeh, *Madha Ba'd Ihraq al-Masjid al-Aqsa?* (Cairo, 1970), 23, 178ff.

16. Abdullah Kannun, "Al-Muslimun wa Mushkilat Filastin," in *Kitab al-Mu'tamar al-Rabi' li-Majma' al-Buhuth al-Islamiyya,* 36, 38.

17. Kamel al-Baqir, "Jawhar al-Qadiyya al-Filastiniyya" [The essence of the Palestinian issue], in *Kitab al-Mu'tamar al-Rabi'* [Book of the Fourth Conference], 136.

18. Abdullah Kannun, "Makanat Bayt al-Maqdis fi al-Islam," in *Kitab al-Mu'tamar al-Rabi' li-Majma' al-Buhuth al-Islamiyya,* 2:39.

19. "And it was the West, champion of the separation of Church and State, cradle of secularism, that helped in the creation of this state founded on the idea of the return to the Promised Land. The intrusion of religion into politics didn't bother European socialists, nor American technocrats. Neither did it bother the atheists of Moscow who were the first to recognize the State of Israel." Habib Boulares, *Islam: The Fear and the Hope* (London: Zed Books, 1990), 25.

20. Muhammad M. al-Fahham, "The Restoration of Jerusalem," in *The Fifth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research* (Cairo: Government Printing Office, 1971), 53.

21. Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Qadhaif al-Haqq* (Kuwait, 1984), 109.

22. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Operation Desert Shield / Desert Storm: The Islamist Perspective," in Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck, eds., *Beyond the Storm* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991), 248–260.

23. See Konstantin Obradovik, ed., *The Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People* (London: Outline Books, 1985), 292–301.

24. Ibid., 245–291.

25. Munir Farah, "Impact on Education," in Naseer A. Aruri, ed., *Occupation: Israel Over Palestine* (Belmont, MA: AAUG, 1983), 295–318; and Naseer Aruri, "Universities Under Occupation," in ibid., 319–336.

26. See, for example, Hasan Khalid, "Kalimat al-Wufud" [Statement of the delegates], *Kitab al-Mu'tamar al-Rabi': al-Muslimun wa al-'Udwan al-Israili* (Cairo, 1968), 2:29.

27. Omar Maxwell, "No Peace Until Palestine Is Free," *Inquiry,* January 1993, 22.

28. 'Abd al-Baqi Khalifa, "al-Tatarruf: Mafahimuh . . . Asbabuh . . . Nata'ijuh . . . 'Ilajuh," *al-Mujtama'*, November 23, 1993.

29. Ibid.

30. Al-Ghazali, *Qadhaif,* 223.

31. Ibid., 225.

32. "This is a surrender to the Jews who have assumed the power in the United States, so that the White House and those in it have become an instrument in the hand of the Jews." "al-Wilayat al-Muttahida Taraf Munhaz Yad'am Isra'il wa-Atma'aha," *al-Majalla* 29, December 5, 1998, 9.

33. George W. Bush, speech before the American Enterprise Institute, February 26, 2003, Washington, DC, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html.

34. Peter Slevin and Mike Allen, "Bush Endorses Sharon's Steps to End Israeli Military Assault," *Washington Post,* April 19, 2002.

35. See, for example, the repeated references to Crusader arrogance in Fathi Bakhkhush, "Daqqat Sa'at al-Jihad: al-Umma fi Khatar" [The hour of jihad has struck: The nation is in danger], *Risalat al-Jihad*, November 1990. He condemns the US-led Desert Storm coalition: "The Crusaders have come this time with a military campaign under the leadership of oppressive America, arrogant with its devastating power" (p. 58). He also writes that the Islamic nationalist rejection of US policies in the region has enraged "oppressive American Crusaderism" because it perceives it as a "threat to its contending power and its [ability] to impose its arrogance on the world" (p. 59). He also calls the forces gathered for Desert Storm "the greatest terrorist Crusader force in history," which can only be resisted by a religious response. "If one of the characteristics of this age is that American arrogance has reached the highest peak, a parallel characteristic is the ability of armed believing nations to mire this arrogance in the dust" (p. 61).

36. Yitzhak Shamir is quoted as having boasted in a radio broadcast that "he is proud of the terrorist record of the Stern Gang including the assassination of Swedish Count Bernadotte on a United Nations Peace Mission in 1948, the assassination of Lord Moyen, the British Minister of State for Middle East Affairs, and the massacre of Deir Yasin." See "Kalla al-Sihyuniyya Haraka 'Unsuriyya" [No, Zionism is a racist movement], *Risalat al-Jihad*, October 1991, 6. Cf.: "The Israeli enemy backed by the forces of imperialism, never ceases to disclose his real designs which are no less than wresting more Arab territories, and thereby impudently paying no heed to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." Abdul-Aziz Kamel, "The Opening Address," *Sixth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research* (Cairo: al-Azhar, 1971), 17. Abba Eban, former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, was reported to have said, "If the General Assembly were to vote by 121 votes to 1 in favor of Israel returning to the Armistice lines . . .

Israel would refuse to comply with that decision." *New York Times,* June 19, 1967. Several examples are cited by Fahmi al-Huwaidi, the popular Egyptian journalist, including the following: "The most recent example of 'good intent' comes from Morocco during the middle of January when the Moroccan government handed Israel the remains of Jews who drowned when their boat overturned while attempting to flee to Israel in the fifties. Israel's response to this gesture was insolent and in bad taste. It marked the event by placing a cornerstone for the erection of a monument to commemorate the victims in Maaleh Edumim, the large settlement established between Jerusalem and Jericho in the West Bank and which the Palestinians seek to have removed." Fahmi al-Huwaidi, "Bayn Bolard wa al-Shaykh Ahmad Yasin: Jawasisuhum Lahum Thaman wa-Munadiluna bila Thaman!" *al-Majalla,* January 30–February 5, 1994, 34.

37. Rashid Qabbani, "al-Gharb Yamuddu Isra'il bi-kul Aslihat al-Damar al Shamil," *al-Mujtama'*, May 12–18, 1998, 25.

38. In his February 7 (broadcast on February 8), 2004, hour-long Oval Office interview with Tim Russert on NBC's *Meet the Press* (http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4179618/ns/meet_the_press/t/transcript-feb-th/#.WbQnTYWcG1s), President Bush declared himself to be a "war president." Bush: "I'm a war president. I make decisions here in the Oval Office in foreign-policy matters with war on my mind. Again, I wish it wasn't true, but it is true. And the American people need to know they got a president who sees the world the way it is. And I see dangers that exist, and it's important for us to deal with them."

39. Grant F. Smith, *Deadly Dogma: How Neoconservatives Broke the Law to Deceive America* (Washington, DC: Middle East Policy, 2006).

40. "CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer; Interview with Condoleezza Rice," aired September 8, 2002, http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0209/08/le.00.html.

41. Al-Rifa'i and Qubaisi, *Amerka,* 256. See also Muhammad Hasanain Haykal, *Al-Imbaratoriyya al-Amerikiyya wa Ighara ala al-Iraq* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2003), 239, 255.

42. Isam Na'man, *Al-Arab Ala Muftaraq Istishraf Tahadiyyat ma Ba'd September 11, 2001* (Cairo: Sharikat al-Matbu'at li al-Tawzi' wa al-Nashr, 2002), 23–24.

43. Al-Rifa'i and Qubaisi, *Amerka*, 238.

44. Osama Ibrahim Hafiz and Asim Abd al-Majid Muhammad, *Mubadarat Waqf al-Unf: Ru'ya Waqi'iyya wa Nazra Shar'iyya* (Cairo: Islamic Turath Bookshop, 2002). For publications against violence after 9/11 by the same press, see Hamdi Abd al-Rahman al-Azim, Najih Ibrahim Abdullah, and Ali Muhammad Ali al-Sharif, *Taslit al-Adwa Ala ma Waqa' fi al-Jihad min Akhta*, 2002; Najih Ibrahim Abdullah and Ali Muhammad Ali al-Sharif, *Hurmat al-Ghulu fi al-Din wa-Takfir al-Muslimin,* 2002; Ali Muhammad Ali al-Sharif and Osama Ibrahim Hafiz, *al-Nusuh wa al-Tabyin fi Tashih Mafahim al-Muhtasibin,* 2002; Karam Muhammad Zuhdi, Najih Ibrahim Abdullah, Ali Muhammad Ali Sharif, Osama Ibrahim Hafiz, Hamdi Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Azim, Fuad Muhammad al-Dualibi, Asim Abd al-Majid Muhammad, and Muhammad Isam al-Din Dirbala, *Tafjirat al-Riyad: al-Ahkam wa al-Athar,* 2003; Karam Muhammad Zuhdi, Najih Ibrahim Abdullah, Ali Muhammad Ali Sharif, Osama Ibrahim Hafiz, Hamdi Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Azim, Fuad Muhammad al-Dualibi, Asim Abd al-Majid Muhammad, and Muhammad Isam al-Din Dirbala, *Istratijiyyat Tafjirat al-Qa'ida: Al-Akhta wa al-Akhtar,* 2004. For a detailed memoir of the activities of al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya, see Muntasir al-Zayyat, *al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya: Riwaya min al-Dakhil* (Cairo: Dar Misr al-Mahrusa, 2005).

45. Karam Muhammad Zuhdi, Najih Ibrahim Abdullah, Ali Muhammad Ali Sharif, Osama Ibrahim Hafiz, Hamdi Abd al-Rahman Abd al-Azim, Fuad Muhammad al-Dualibi, Asim Abd al-Majid Muhammad, and Muhammad Isam al-Din Dirbala, *Tafjirat al-Riyad: al-Ahkam wa al-Athar* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Turath al-Islami, 2003), 52.

46. Ibid., 40.

47. Ibid., 116.

48. Public Law 107–245, October 21, 2002.

49. Public Law 105–338, October 31, 1998.

50. Public Law 108–175, December 12, 2003.

51. Zuhdi et al., *Tafjirat al-Riyad,* 12.

52. Al-Rifa'i and Qubaisi, *Amerka,* 299–300.

53. Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, US Chamber of Commerce, White House, November 6, 2003.

54. For an extensive discussion of the topic, see Al-Rifa'i and Qubaisi, *Amerka.*

55. Shimon Peres and Arye Naor, *The New Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993).

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CHAPTER 18

IDEOLOGY AND AMERICA'S NUCLEAR CRISIS WITH IRAN

Mark L. Haas

This chapter examines how ideological variables shaped Iranian leaders' views and policies toward the United States, with particular emphasis on Iran's nuclear policies, during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama presidencies. To what extent and in what ways was Iranian hostility toward America a product of the profound ideological differences dividing the two states? To answer this question I examine the perceptions and actions of different ideological factions within Iranian policymaking circles. If ideological variables were central to Iranian leaders' international relations, then different ideological factions should have pursued markedly different foreign policies toward the United States. If, however, different ideological groups advocated fairly similar policies toward America despite their domestic differences, then systemic variables—such as US power and policies—were more likely at the heart of Iran's actions toward America. The core issue examined in this chapter is of critical importance for effective decision making by American politicians. Only by understanding the root sources of Iranian leaders' views of the United States can American policymakers most effectively advance US interests in these relations.[1]

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first two describe, respectively, the substantial ideological differences dividing the governing parties in Iran and how these differences resulted in significant variation in views of the United States. In the third section, I demonstrate how these partisan ideological differences affected in major ways Iranian leaders' views of nuclear weapons. Because members of different ideological groups have tended to view the need for and utility of nuclear weapons very differently, the best hope for resolving the international crisis involving this issue is rooted in Iranian domestic politics. I conclude with an analysis of what policies US leaders should adopt in order to take advantage of the chapter's principal findings.

IRAN'S IDEOLOGICAL FACTIONS

There are a number of ways to define ideology. I define it as leaders' preferences for ordering domestic politics. Ideologies, in other words, are the specific principles by which different groups attempt to legitimate their claim to rule and the primary institutional, economic, and social goals that they try to realize in their states. Ideologies are identified by what politicians value most highly for their societies and the major differences that separate different political parties or groups from one another.

The degree of ideological differences (or the "ideological distance") dividing leaders of states frequently has a profound impact on their foreign policies.[2] The greater the ideological differences dividing decision makers in different states, frequently the higher their threat perceptions and thus the greater the likelihood of hostile relations developing. Leaders dedicated to opposing ideological principles tend to assume the worst about one another's international intentions, while also fearing the subversive impact of the other on their society. The reverse patterns tend to hold the greater the ideological similarities uniting leaders. These relationships, as we shall see, held for Iran's interactions with the United States during the years examined in this study.

Iranian leaders since the 1990s have frequently divided into two main ideological groups: ideological "reformers" and "conservatives" (the latter could also be labeled "ideological hard-liners").[3] Iranian conservatives' primary domestic objective during the period under investigation was to preserve the political system established by Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini after the Iranian revolution in 1979 (e.g., rule by clergy based on a narrow interpretation of Islamic law, governmental regulation of personal virtue, and a rejection of what conservatives perceived to be defining principles of Western culture: materialism, secularism, immorality, and the separation of religion from politics). Central to the conservative ideology was Khomeini's doctrine of *velayat-e faqih*, or rule by the jurisprudent (a reference to the office of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, which is the most powerful political institution in Iran and one that is filled by a leading Shi'a cleric). This doctrine asserts the necessity of clerics' political control, and it legitimates the Iranian theocracy.[4]

To Iranian conservatives, the religious dimension of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) was much more important than the republican component. Indeed, some conservatives rejected democratic discourse and the related protection of political pluralism. For example, according to Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, who was a close adviser to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, "the prophets of God did not believe in pluralism. They believed that only one idea was right."[5] Other conservatives claimed that the regime must be connected to and have some backing from the people. Democratic practices, though, were clearly subordinate to the preferences of the ruling clerics, especially the Supreme Leader.[6]

Conservatives believed that their ideological principles were antithetical to Western liberalism and that in order to preserve the former in Iran, the latter had to be eliminated. According to the conservative candidate in the 1997 presidential elections, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri (who was widely expected to win): "Liberalism is a real threat for the country and it must be eradicated."[7] Or as two other conservatives asserted: "Western liberal culture is incompatible with Islamic culture," therefore only one or the other can survive.[8]

Iranian reformers, in contrast, advocated important liberalizing changes for Iranian politics and society.[9] According to Mohammad Khatami, a leading reformer who was Iran's president from 1997 to 2005, the core political goal of reformers was to "introduce to the world the model of religious democracy."[10] Reformers, in other words, were trying to find a balance between liberal values and the Islamist system that had existed in Iran since 1979.[11] On the one hand, the goal of "religious democracy" represented a rejection of liberal tenets because it required that religious authorities have greater involvement in political affairs than was deemed acceptable in Western states, and it meant that some individual freedoms must be compromised in order to maintain the religious identity of the regime. Leading reformers, including Khatami, argued that individuals did not have the right either to question Islamic tenets (i.e., many reformers denied the validity of freedom *from* religion) or to overthrow the Islamic Republic (people could reform the regime but not destroy it). As Khatami explained in a 1997 speech, "No person is at liberty to endanger the security of the society, the interests of the country [or] scar the fundamentals of Islam."[12] According to reformers, only by preserving the religious authority and identity of the regime could Iran maintain a level of morality and spirituality that Western democracies lacked.[13]

In other ways, however, reformers were in accord with core liberal principles and thus in major ideological disagreement with Iranian conservatives. Although Iranian reformers wanted to preserve the religious identity of the state and thus some of the political power of clerics, reformers believed that this power as constituted was too great, which was leading to abuses. Thus Khatami asserted that the government's power in Iran should be criticized and balanced because "too much power leads to corruption, even if those who hold power are good people."[14] To reformers, the best way to balance and criticize government power was to better respect democratic values and rights—for example, establishing the rule of law, creating checks and balances among all the branches of government, exhibiting greater tolerance of different political opinions, and better protecting pluralism and minority rights.[15] Khatami's primary domestic objectives while president were, in his own words, to "institutionalize the rule of law" and protect the "freedom of individuals and the rights of the nation [through] constitutionally guaranteed liberties, strengthening . . . the institutions of civil society . . . and preventing any violation of constitutional rights."[16] These goals, as one scholar summarizes, were "clearly inspired by the West."[17] According to Khatami, it was only by implementing these major liberalizing reforms that "our country and our society will be preserved."[18]

Reformers' goals survived the end of Khatami's presidency. The manifesto of the reformist Green Movement, issued in 2009, called for the release of all political prisoners; the protection of freedoms of press and assembly; the separation of the military from politics; the prevention of the politicalization of clerics; and the democratic election of all officials with term limits.[19]

Iranian reformers' ideological objectives, in sum, were significantly closer to Western ideological principles than were those of Iranian conservatives. If ideological relationships play an important role in formulating foreign policies, then the differing domestic principles of Iranian reformers and conservatives should have led them to possess very different views and policies toward the United States. The next sections demonstrate the accuracy of this prediction.

IDEOLOGY AND IRANIAN VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES

The five most important political bodies in Iran are the office of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, the presidency, the parliament, the Council of Guardians, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).[20] The Supreme Leader is by far the most powerful person in Iran. He is the commander of all military forces, and he appoints and dismisses the head of the judiciary, the president of state radio and television, and half of the members of the Council of Guardians (the head of the judiciary—another appointee of the Supreme Leader—proposes the remaining members of the council, but these must be approved by parliament). The Supreme Leader also has a budget (the amount is undisclosed) that is independent of the president and parliament.

The president is Iran's second most powerful political figure. He appoints and dismisses ministers and controls the powerful Planning and Budget organization, which is important for establishing economic policy. The president is also the chairman of the National Security Council, which coordinates governmental activities involving defense, intelligence, and foreign policy.

Iran's parliament (Majlis) has considerable power, especially by Middle Eastern standards. It is responsible for, among other things, drafting legislation, ratifying treaties, and approving the state budget. The Council of Guardians, though, has the power to veto parliamentary legislation that the council's members judge to be incompatible with Islamic law. It can also reject candidates for any office who are deemed to be unsuitable based on a candidate's perceived Islamic convictions and loyalty to the regime.

The IRGC, which is Iran's most powerful military entity, has become increasingly active in political and economic affairs since the late 1990s. Its activities have included the harassment and sometimes murder of ideological reformers, the management of Iran's nuclear capabilities, and the oversight of industries and services that likely account for at least a quarter of Iran's economic output.[21] The political power of the IRGC has increased over the years, especially as elites, including the Supreme Leader, have relied on it to crush dissent, including the widespread protests that followed the fraudulent 2009 presidential elections.[22]

Iranian conservatives have always controlled the Office of the Supreme Leader, the Guardian Council, and the IRGC. Reformers controlled the presidency from 1997 to

2005 and parliament from 2000 to 2004, both of which were historical firsts. From 2005 to 2013, conservatives dominated all key political institutions. Hassan Rouhani, a moderate candidate backed by a reformist coalition, won the 2013 presidential election, and reformers and moderates significantly increased their influence in parliament after the 2016 elections. Reformist and moderate supporters of Rouhani controlled 122 seats, hard-line conservatives 84, and independents 82.[23]

Although Iranian conservatives always possessed considerably more domestic power than reformers did, this does not mean that the latter's power from 1997 to 2005 or 2013 to 2017 was inconsequential. Reformers influenced policies in key ways, leading conservatives to lament the direction of Iranian decision making when reformers were at the zenith of their influence. Conservatives welcomed the reformers' parliamentary and presidential defeats in 2004 and 2005 precisely because they recognized that reformers were having an impact on policy that ran contrary to conservative preferences.[24] Indeed, so great was the perceived threat posed by reformers that key conservative leaders, including the Supreme Leader and IRGC commanders, were brought to the "conclusion that a counteroffensive was necessary for regime survival."[25] The result was a conservative consolidation in the 2000s as regime hard-liners further limited the power of the president in favor of the Supreme Leader and Revolutionary Guard.[26] Conservatives have also condemned the direction of Iranian domestic and foreign policies after the election of the ideologically moderate Hassan Rouhani to the presidency, as I discuss in greater detail below.

As an ideology-based understanding of international threats predicts, the ideological differences between Iranian reformers and conservatives resulted in very different views of the United States. To begin with, the huge ideological divide separating the United States from Iranian conservatives pushed the latter to see America as both an inevitable threat to Iran's security and a powerful force for domestic subversion. This does not mean that American power and various provocative policies (such as stationing troops throughout the Middle East and enacting economic sanctions against Iran) did not exacerbate conservatives' perceptions of threat. They clearly did. But conservatives believed the root cause of US-Iranian enmity to be based in ideological differences: the ideological beliefs of US leaders were what caused Americans to adopt hostile policies toward Iran in the first place. As Nateq-Nuri explained, Iran's "struggle against America has its origin in our ideology." Consequently the United States by "its nature" was a permanent enemy of the IRI.[27] Supreme Leader Khamenei often made similar statements. In a 2003 speech, for example, he claimed that "the primary reason for US hostility toward our country is the Islamic identity of our system." Earlier in the year, he asserted that "it is natural that our Islamic system should be viewed as an enemy and an intolerable rival by such an oppressive power as the United States, which is trying to establish a global dictatorship. . . . It is also clear that the conflict and confrontation between the two is something natural and unavoidable."[28]

The beliefs linking ideological enmity with the United States to high levels of threat continued into the Obama presidency. As the scholar Saeid Golker summarizes in a 2014 article: "The IRGC projects the United States and Iran as being on two opposite fronts: good (jebeh-e Hagh) and evil (jebeh Batel). It depicts their confrontation as strategic, not tactical. Jojjatol Islam Saeidi, the head of the Office of the Representative of the Supreme Leader . . . has said, 'Our problem with the U.S. is ideological; America is always looking to diminish Islam from Iran.' That is why the American grand strategy has always been to overthrow the Islamic Republic."[29]

In addition to anticipating highly malign intentions by US leaders, Iranian conservatives also repeatedly referred to the danger of "cultural onslaught" from the West: the spreading of Western values such as materialism, secularism, and the separation of religion and politics. According to Khamenei, the West in general and the United States in particular "has targeted our Islamic faith and character."[30] At the same time that Khatami was saying that Western ideology had much to recommend it (see below), Khamenei was blaming Western civilization for "directing everyone towards materialism while money, gluttony and carnal desires are made the greatest aspirations."[31] Nateq-Nuri similarly blamed the West for "spreading corruptions and obscenity; ridiculing sacred Islamic . . . traditions; propagating debauchery [and] raunchiness."[32] According to him, the West's "cultural onslaught" was attempting to destroy Iran's "ideology, religious thinking, national identity and religious values."[33] The secretary of the Guardian Council, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, was more succinct: "The enemy is trying to destroy Islamic culture."[34]

Once again, these views expressing intense fears of ideological subversion have been consistently expressed across US presidencies. In a September 2015 speech to IRGC commanders, the Supreme Leader stated that "the enemy [the United States] is thinking about infiltration, particularly politico-cultural infiltration, in the vain hope of putting an end to the [Islamic] Revolution." This ideological challenge, according to Khamenei, had to be met with an ideological response, namely the strengthening of revolutionary zeal.[35] Consistent with this position, the IRGC since the late 2000s has intensified measures, such as selection and indoctrination processes, that are designed to enhance devotion to the core ideological principles of the regime, thereby guarding against ideological subversion. Recruitment to the IRGC became more restrictive with the goal of hiring more religiously conservative individuals, and ideological indoctrination in support of a conservative interpretation of regime principles intensified.[36]

To be clear, conservative fears of subversion were based on much more than a worry that ideas from one society will diffuse to another. Conservatives believed that the US government was actively promoting its ideological principles in order to destroy the Islamic Republic. According to Khamenei, speaking in 2003, "More than Iran's enemies need artillery, guns and so forth, [American leaders] need to spread cultural values that lead to moral corruption." Three years earlier, the Supreme Leader asserted that "I have now reached the conclusion that the United States has devised a comprehensive plan to subvert the Islamic system. This plan is an imitation of the plan that led to the collapse of the former Soviet Union."[37] This last statement came at a time when many analysts were comparing President Khatami and Iranian reformers to former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev and Soviet New Thinkers.

To prevent ideological subversion to Western principles, Iran, to conservatives, had to preserve its hostility toward the United States. Economic, diplomatic, or strategic interactions ran the risk of legitimating American cultural values and corrupting pious Muslims to immoral ideological beliefs. For many in the Iranian right, the risks of ideological contagion were more important than material gain. Conservatives lambasted Iranians who advocated economic cooperation with America as dupes and US agents whose policies would create fifth columns for Iran's ideological enemies. Conservatives, in other words, viewed the United States as a major threat to their interests independently of America's "provocative" international policies (unless economic cooperation is perceived as aggressive). Khamenei was scathing in his opposition to globalization and, in his term, the "Westoxicated" elements in Iran that supported it: "Audio and visual waves, which are worse than warplanes, are being used to disseminate a rogue culture aimed at reasserting the domination of the enemies of Islam, paving the way for the imposition of unethical values and Westernized ideas to captivate and humiliate Muslims."[38] Mohsen Kadivar, a senior reformist cleric, summed up the conservative position: "When the West threatens isolation, [conservatives] welcome it. They cannot integrate. They feel if Iran integrated it would lose its Islamic identity."[39]

The more liberal ideological beliefs of Iranian reformers led them to a significantly lower threat perception of the United States. Indeed, given their emphasis on civil rights and institutional checks on governmental power, it is not surprising that members of this group looked on elements of Western culture with admiration. Once again, this does not mean that reformers wanted to replicate Western regimes. Rather, they asserted that they wanted to take what was best from Western ideology—chiefly the emphasis on the protection of individual liberty and minority rights and the institutions and values that helped achieve these goals, such as the separation of political powers, constitutionalism, and a thriving civil society—and unite it with the Iranian emphasis on personal virtue and piousness. Iranian reformers, in other words, hoped to get the freedom enjoyed in the West without its secularization and materialism. President Khatami, for example, claimed that the West has a "superb civilization." While Iran should neither imitate it "blindly" nor abandon Iran's "own identity," he said, it should borrow the West's "good points" so as to "enrich our own culture." Unless Iran's leaders "correctly identify the positive and negative aspects of western civilization," Iran will not "develop" to the fullest extent possible.[40]

This admiration of Western ideology and the perceived need to borrow core institutional and normative aspects from it applied even to the United States. In fact, to some reformers the United States was especially deserving of respect and emulation. America is a free society with very high levels of technological and economic achievement, yet it is also very religious. In a January 1998 interview with CNN, President Khatami praised America because it was founded by Puritans who "desired a system [that] combined the worship of God with human dignity and freedom." "What [Iranians] seek is what the founders of American civilization" pursued. "This is why we sense an intellectual affinity with the essence of American civilization."[41]

If Western ideology was to a significant extent to be admired and emulated, as reformers claimed, interaction with the United States was not nearly as threatening to Iranian interests as conservatives asserted. In fact, since reformers aimed to borrow from the West its best ideological elements so that Iran could reach the highest political, economic, and moral development possible, interaction with the United States was to be encouraged, not avoided—hence their interest in economic cooperation, political negotiations, and cultural exchanges with Western countries, including the United States. The scholar Anoushiravan Ehteshami succinctly expresses this point: "For many reformists . . . restoration of relations with the United States is vital for renewal at home."[42] International rapprochement, in short, could facilitate domestic liberalization.[43]

Consistent with an ideological foundation of perceptions of international threats, it is noteworthy that reformist politicians and newspapers in the first decade of the 2000s argued that domestic liberalization was ultimately the best, and perhaps the only, way to defuse the military threat that the United States posed to Iran. In February 2002, 172 out of 290 members of the Majlis signed a petition that denounced illiberal policies, including "repressive measures against journalistic circles, political activists and students."[44] To reformers, Iran's illiberal domestic system was provoking and justifying American enmity. As a direct result of this belief, "reformist newspapers warned the conservative establishment that the only way to preempt the imminent US threat was to democratize Iran's political system and allow other groups to participate in the process. In other words, internal legitimacy was the single best solution to preempt the external threat."[45] To Iranian reformers, US hostility to Iran was therefore not about relative power concerns or anti-Islamic sentiments consistent with "clash of civilizations" thinking. Instead, reformers asserted that American enmity was caused to a large degree by the repressive nature of the Iranian regime. Shrink the ideological distance dividing the United States and Iran by liberalizing Iranian politics, reformers claimed, and US enmity with Iran would abate.[46]

Hassan Rouhani, who won the 2013 presidential election, was not nearly the advocate for liberalization that Khatami was. Before he ran for president in 2013, Rouhani did not support protests for political change, and he at times even called for the support of armed forces as they suppressed student dissent.[47] Since the 2013 presidential campaign, though, he has reversed these positions and advocated for important political reforms that would weaken the role of government in society and better protect the rights of citizens. These reforms include allowing greater respect for pluralism, greater Internet access for the country, greater press freedoms, and greater tolerance for civic activism.[48] Given these conflicting preferences, Rouhani is best described as an ideological moderate who tries to balance some liberalization with the desire for orderly change and the preservation of core ideological principles of the regime. The moderate or centrist faction of Iranian governing elites has historically supported the "China model" of development, which combines a capitalist economy with authoritarian government. Key members of this group, though, have supported greater political liberalization since the 2009 presidential elections.[49] Although Rouhani is an ideological moderate, it is important to stress that more liberal reformers were a key constituency of Rouhani during the presidential election.[50] This created a powerful incentive for Rouhani to move in a more liberal direction in order to satisfy his political base.

Given these preferences and incentives, it is not surprising that Rouhani has been much more supportive of improved relations with the United States than are most conservatives. As Rouhani put it in 2013: "It is not that Iran has to remain angry with the United States forever and have no relations with it. Under appropriate conditions, where national interests are protected, this situation has to change."[51] Rouhani and his foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, explicitly rejected the belief championed by conservatives that the US-Iranian relationship is zero-sum, asserting instead that it can be a "win-win" based on substantial common interests.[52] From very early in his presidency, Rouhani revealed a heightened willingness to break with long-standing practice and engage in direct interactions with US leaders. For example, he accepted a phone call from Obama in September 2013 while participating in an event at the United Nations. This was the first conversation between the US and Iranian president since the revolution in 1979, and it was met with intense criticism by conservatives.[53]

The differing views of the United States repeatedly expressed by leaders of different ideological groups are not just talk; they have had major policy ramifications. In the next section, I demonstrate how the differing views of the United States held by Iranian reformers and conservatives have affected their policies on an issue that is critical to American security: the development of nuclear weapons.

IRANIAN POLITICS AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS, 1997–2017

Since the 1990s, US leaders have repeatedly asserted that preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is a very high-interest issue, and the conflict over this issue has remained a key source of international tension. The best chance of resolving this dispute is rooted in Iranian domestic politics. Iranian leaders do not possess a monolithic view of the benefits and costs of nuclear weapons. Instead, there is a continuing debate over this issue that largely corresponds with politicians' ideological beliefs.

Iranian conservatives for the most part have been forceful advocates for Iran's nuclear weapons program. This is not surprising since these individuals tend to view other countries, especially the United States, as grave threats to Iran's security. To conservatives, the world is "a Hobbesian one of unremitting struggle, where predatory powers lurk to dictate and dominate and where the only currency is military power. Power, in this view, is the indispensable element for survival."[54] To Iranian conservatives, in other words, nuclear weapons would be a significant aid to Iran's safety in the face of mortal enemies. According to Ali Ardashir Larijani (who was appointed by Ahmadinejad to be secretary of the Supreme National Security Council and was Iran's top negotiator on the nuclear issue from 2005 to 2007), in order to protect Iran from foreign threats "you have to find a way to be able to take the country's level and status to a point so as to automatically solve your national security problem, otherwise these pressure factors will always weigh on you." "If Iran becomes atomic Iran, no longer will anyone dare to challenge it."[55] In November 2004, the conservative newspaper and mouthpiece for the Supreme Leader, *Jumhuri-ye Islami*, similarly claimed that "it is obvious having access to advanced weapons shall cause deterrence and therefore security, and will neutralize the evil wishes of great powers to attack."[56]

Most Iranian conservatives reject various arguments against the acquisition of nuclear weapons, including claims that these armaments might diminish Iran's security by provoking other countries, especially the United States, into adopting aggressive policies to prevent this outcome. Ideological enmity leads conservatives to believe that America would be hostile to Iran no matter what policies it adopted on the nuclear issue. Members of this ideological faction view US hostility to Iran's nuclear program as an excuse that the Americans are using to force ideological change. According to Khamenei, speaking in 2003, "What the United States, which has been spearheading the aggression against our Islamic revolution, expects from our nation and government is submission and surrender to its hegemony, and this is the real motive for US claims regarding weapons of mass destruction, human rights or democracy."[57]

Iranian conservatives, in other words, tend not to view conflict with the United States as a product of the "security dilemma" (a realist concept that refers to the action-reaction cycle in which states attempting to make themselves feel safe frighten others into adopting more-aggressive policies). If Iran and America were caught in a security dilemma, hostilities between the two states could be reduced if each adopted more-reassuring policies. Iranian conservatives instead see conflict with the United States as inevitable as long as the huge ideological gap dividing the two countries exists. Given this perception of implacable US enmity, conservatives see little reason for Iran not to develop nuclear weapons. Indeed, conservatives believe that even if Iran abandoned its nuclear program, American pressure would continue because, according to army commander Mohammed Salimi, "the enemies of Iran are bent on changing the regime in Iran."[58] Khamenei stated in 2006 that "if it's not this [Iran's nuclear program], they [US leaders] will find another issue. Their aim is to put us under duress and exhaust us. Their objective is regime change."[59] President Ahmadinejad similarly asserted in 2008 that "the American government has been against our people for 30 years. They always find an excuse. When the nuclear issue was not on the agenda, they had imposed an embargo on false pretexts. The nuclear issue is only an excuse for the US administration to display its bad intentions against our people."[60]

The preceding analysis does not mean that Iranian conservatives would never support abandoning the country's nuclear weapons program. The incentives pushing for this decision, though, would have to be extremely high—and considerably higher than they would have to be for most reformers. This is largely because of the very high value that conservatives attribute to nuclear weapons in order to counter extreme values of perceived threat.

Conservatives' nuclear policies during the Obama administration support these claims. As I discuss in greater detail in the next section, the devastating economic effects created by sanctions initiated by the Obama administration led some conservatives to change previously held positions and advocate negotiating with the United States to resolve the nuclear crisis. But many conservatives continued to reject this course of action despite the deterioration of Iran's economy. It was only after an ideological moderate, Hassan Rouhani, was elected president that Iran was able to agree to a deal with the Americans. If conservatives had continued to control all major political institutions, this outcome would have been much less likely.[61]

Iranian reformers, including when at the height of their political power from 2001 to 2005, tend to possess significantly different views of nuclear weapons than do most conservatives.[62] Most importantly, many reformers advocate that Iran *not* develop these weapons, at least if this outcome means sacrificing what they deem to be more important objectives.

In the first place, many reformers believe both that economic development and industrialization should be among Iran's foremost political objectives and that economic cooperation with the Western powers is indispensable for realizing these goals. Reformers understand that developing nuclear weapons would be doubly detrimental to these ends. The United States and its allies would likely respond to an Iranian nuclear weapons program by increasing the level of economic sanctions directed at Iran and rescinding any positive economic inducements—such as lifting existing sanctions and supporting Iran's candidacy to join the World Trade Organization (WTO)—that these countries had offered Iran to entice its leaders to not acquire nuclear armaments.

Reformers, like conservatives, view the development of nuclear technology as potentially benefiting Iran's interests. Whereas conservatives see nuclear weapons primarily as a means of protecting Iran from its foremost ideological enemy, however, reformers often view them as a means of leveraging more economic assistance from vital economic partners. Consequently, most reformers believe that Iran's nuclear weapons program should be sacrificed for the right economic price—a view that most conservatives reject.[63] Key moderates agree with this position as well, most notably future president Rouhani, who asserted during the election campaign in 2013: "It's nice that Iran's centrifuges spin, but only on condition that the country moves forward [economically]. A situation in which the centrifuges move and the country is asleep is unacceptable."[64]

Reformers' economic justifications for not developing nuclear weapons are reinforced by their understanding of the most effective means of protecting Iran's security. Iranian reformers agree with conservatives that Iran should be free of foreign intimidation and interference in its internal affairs. In order to achieve these goals, however, reformers emphasize the need to develop cooperative, reassuring policies, especially regarding nuclear weapons.

For example, during Khatami's informal talks with US leaders after his election in 1997, his representatives relayed to the Americans that Khatami "understood [America's] concerns" about Iran's WMD programs, and that he and fellow reformers were willing to be "accommodating" on this issue.[65] Publicly, the president asserted that while Iran had the right to develop nuclear energy, the international community has "the right to be assured that [this technology] will be channeled in the right way."[66] Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, a reformist parliamentarian, expressed reformers' position on the nuclear issue in a 2005 statement:

> Reformists believe that the insistence on the [nuclear weapons] program will create international reactions that in the long-term will result in

> distrust by the international community. . . . Reformists see the move toward uranium enrichment for the purpose of acquiring nuclear weapons as a danger for the country. . . . Therefore, subject to the provision of economic incentives that allow for Iran's development, the reformists believe that uranium enrichment should come to a halt. Rather, the government should base its legitimacy on the people's votes, and make every effort to gain the trust of the international community.[67]

President Khatami, reformers in parliament, and reformist newspapers, while insisting that Iran had the right to develop a civilian nuclear program, all stated in the early 2000s that if Iran did not adopt reassuring policies, such as allowing international inspectors to examine Iran's nuclear facilities, foreigners would be justified in thinking that Iran's intentions were not peaceful.[68]

Rouhani concurred with reformists' belief that nuclear weapons were likely to harm more than help Iranian interests, asserting in a 2006 article in *Time* magazine, a year after he had been head of Iran's negotiating team regarding the nuclear issue: "A nuclear weaponized Iran destabilizes the region, prompts a regional arms race, and wastes the scarce resources of the region. And taking account of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and its policy of ensuring a strategic edge for Israel, an Iranian bomb will accord Iran no security dividends."[69] According to Thomas Erdbrink, a reporter for the *New York Times*, Rouhani "has long made clear that Iran needs to show more transparency in its nuclear activities, to build trust with the West. 'After that [according to Rouhani] we will prevent new sanctions against our country, and gradually they will be lifted so that we will be free of all of them.'"[70]

After Obama became president, reformers continued to assert that the costs for Iran created by the possession of nuclear weapons were greater than the benefits. According to a statement released by the Iranian Green Movement (the reformers) in the summer of 2009: "The Iranian Green Movement does not want a nuclear bomb, but instead desires peace for the world and democracy for Iran. . . . The Green Movement in Iran furthermore understands the world's concerns [about Iran's nuclear program] and in fact has similar concerns itself." *Los Angeles Times* journalists summarized the meaning of this and similar reformist statements, as well as interviews with reformers, as follows: "[Iran's nuclear weapons program] is now intensifying the differences between political reformers, who increasingly want to engage the West, and the hardliners who for years have resisted what they regard as international meddling."[71]

Indeed, it was because Iranian conservatives were so threatened by reformers' policy differences (both domestically and internationally) that the crackdown on reformist protestors after the fraudulent 2009 presidential election was so fierce. According to an Iranian analyst on the scenes of the protests, Iran's Revolutionary Guards and other conservative leaders "feel very much threatened by the reformist movement. They feel that the reformists will open up to the West and be lenient on the nuclear issue. It is a confrontation of two ways of thinking, the revolutionary and the internationalist."[72]

Reformers' calls for accommodating policies on the nuclear issue resulted from these individuals' ideological relationships with other states. As Shahram Chubin explains (referring to the Khatami years), “The reform faction [did] not have the same sense of [international] embattlement as their conservative counterparts.” “Where [reformers differed] from the conservatives [was] in their view of foreign policy generally, specifically with reference to the value of détente, dialogue and cooperative security. Lacking a sense of [ideological] mission, and having a different conception of what Iran represents (a democratic republic as well as an Islamic one) the reformists [saw] interdependence and engagement [with the West] as desirable (and inevitable).”[73] Iranian reformers’ affinity with core ideological attributes of Western states, in other words, pushed these individuals to possess reduced threat perceptions that allowed them to advocate reassuring policies and security cooperation to protect Iran’s safety, rather than relying on the power of nuclear weapons and deterrent threats, as conservatives prescribed.

Skeptics might dismiss reformers’ willingness to be accommodating on the nuclear issue as strategic rhetoric that was designed to fool foreign leaders about Iran’s true intentions. They may have been buying time to develop nuclear weapons until they could present the world with a nuclear fait accompli, much as North Korea did in the 1990s and early 2000s.

There is important evidence that potentially supports this interpretation of Iranian policies. Most notably, Iran’s nuclear weapons program appears to have been accelerated in 1999—two years after Khatami became president—and continued after reformers gained control of parliament in 2000.[74]

Whether the continued development of nuclear weapons in Iran even at the height of reformers’ domestic power resulted from their interest in developing these armaments despite public statements to the contrary, or from conservatives’ continued political dominance despite reformers’ control of the presidency and parliament from 2000 to 2004, is unclear. We do not know enough about the internal workings of Iranian politics to answer this question. What is clear, though, is that once Iran’s clandestine nuclear weapons program became public in 2002, leaders from Iran’s various political factions responded quite differently. Whereas most conservatives advocated that Iran continue with its nuclear plans even in the face of international opposition, reformers adopted costly policies that were designed to address Western security fears.[75] In October 2003, for example, Khatami signed an agreement with France, Britain, and Germany (the EU-3) to suspend uranium enrichment. In December 2003, the president signed the Additional Protocol to the NPT, which allowed for short-notice international inspections of Iran’s nuclear facilities. In November 2004, the Iranian government signed the Paris Agreement, which renewed its commitment to continue the suspension of uranium enrichment and related activities.[76] The Khatami government continued to offer important concessions on the nuclear issue, including intrusive inspections, into early 2005.[77]

After Khatami’s agreement with the EU-3, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was able to declare in November 2003 that there was no evidence of an Iranian nuclear weapons program. Similarly, in a report issued in March 2005, Mohamed ElBaradei, the director general of the IAEA, stated that no new evidence of illicit nuclear activities had been discovered and that Iran, as far as the IAEA could see, was in compliance with the Paris Agreement. (ElBaradei did, however, express a suspicion at this time that Iran might not be fully cooperating with his agency's inspections.[78]) In November 2007, the US government issued a national intelligence estimate that stated that "we judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program."[79]

The claim that ideological reformers during 2000–2005, when their political power was at its height, were genuinely committed to reassuring the West of Iran's nuclear intentions is supported by the fact that many of their policies were quickly reversed after the conservative Ahmadinejad was elected to the presidency in place of Khatami. As the scholar Ali Parchami summarizes, after conservatives reacquired control over all key political institutions, "they were now prepared to go on the offensive with the nuclear issue: henceforth the idea of concessions was to be viewed with nothing short of disdain."[80]

Ahmadinejad was inaugurated on August 6, 2005. Within two days, Iran reneged on its commitments in the Paris Agreement and Additional Protocol. On August 8, the Esfahan nuclear facility resumed the conversion of uranium yellowcake into uranium hexafluoride, which is a gas that is necessary for making nuclear fuel.[81] In January 2006, Iran removed IAEA seals from enrichment sites. In February 2006, the IAEA board of governors referred Iran to the UN Security Council to begin discussions on imposing economic sanctions.[82]

Further corroborating the claim that reformers were genuinely interested in reaching a compromise with the United States and its allies on the development of nuclear technology is that, according to virtually all accounts, the domestic battles between Iranian ideological conservatives and reformers on this issue were extremely contentious. If these groups had actually agreed on the need to acquire nuclear weapons—and therefore reformers' statements and actions indicating otherwise were meant to lull foreign powers into a sense of complacency until Iran could present the world with a nuclear fait accompli—domestic infighting on this issue would have been muted. Instead, politicians publicly and privately attacked one another for their positions on Iran's nuclear program (conservative rebukes of reformers' actions also show that the latter were having an important impact on policy, despite conservatives' greater domestic power).[83] For example, in April 1998 the commander of the IRGC, Yahya Rahim Safavi, gave a private speech to his officers that was subsequently leaked. In it, he criticized the direction of Iran's foreign policy, including its nuclear program, under President Khatami: "Can we withstand America's threats and domineering attitude with a policy of détente? Can we foil dangers coming from America through dialogue of civilizations? Will we be able to protect the Islamic Republic from international Zionism by signing conventions banning the proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons?"[84] Similarly, in November 2004 former IRGC commander Mohsen Rezai condemned Khatami's cooperation with international inspectors and the "turning over [of] our country's top intelligence documents" (as stipulated by the Paris Agreement and Additional Protocol).[85] To Rezai, Iran's security would have been better served by trying to intimidate the West with the power that Iran might have, rather than by providing reassurances about the weapons it lacked. In April 2005, *Jumhuri-ye Islami*, the mouthpiece of the Supreme Leader, harshly criticized reformers' views of the

United States and their resulting nuclear policies: "The core problem is the fact that our officials' outlook on the nuclear dossier of Iran is faulty and they are on the wrong track. It seems they have failed to appreciate that America is after our destruction and the nuclear issue is merely an excuse for them."[86]

In the same vein, Khamenei frequently criticized the reformist-led sixth parliament (2000–2004) for being "pro-American" and "radical" in ways that were "contrary to many of the regime's interests." In contrast, the Supreme Leader openly praised the conservative-dominated seventh parliament (2004–2008). According to Khamenei, the seventh parliament, unlike "the previous term, really stood firm on the nuclear issue." Similarly, Major General Hassan Firouzabadi, the chief of staff of the armed forces, warned before the 2008 parliamentary elections that reformers "must not be allowed to find their way into the Majlis again and to repeat their past performance," since reformers do "nothing but fulfill US interests. . . . Has the Iranian nation not already tasted this bitter shame once?"[87]

If reformers were not genuinely interested in nuclear arms control as part of overall negotiations with the United States, there would have been no need for conservatives to complain so intensely about the direction of Iran's foreign policies, including its weapons programs. Instead, different ideological distances dividing various Iranian policymakers from their American counterparts resulted in significantly different international preferences for Iran's core security policies.

The same patterns continued during the Rouhani presidency. Reformers and moderates agreed to costly decisions that were designed to reassure other powers about Iran's nuclear intensions, and conservatives frequently complained bitterly about these choices. In July 2015, the United States and Iran, in addition to China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Germany, agreed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In the accord, which was spearheaded from the Iranian side by Rouhani, Iran agreed to eliminate some stockpiles of uranium, reduce others, and cut by two-thirds its number of gas centrifuges. Iran also committed for fifteen years to enrich uranium only to very low percentages, so that it could not be weaponized, and to not build any new heavy-water nuclear facilities. The agreement allowed for intrusive verification procedures by the IAEA. Although the accord remains very controversial (with many US conservatives intensely opposed), it is telling that top security professionals in Israel—which is the country that is likely to be the most directly threatened by a nuclear Iran—have asserted that the danger from the Islamic Republic has significantly diminished due to the signing of the accord and its verification procedures.[88]

As during the Khatami era, many Iranian conservatives were alarmed by a potential rapprochement with the United States. The commander of the IRGC, Major General Mohammad Jafari, for example, accused Foreign Minister Zarif of being "infected with Western doctrine" because of his willingness to agree to the JCPOA.[89] To Jafari, the JCPOA opened up Iran to counterrevolutionary forces, as "the enemy has now resorted to using soft political and economic power [to subvert the Islamic Republic]. . . . The answer to these kinds of threats after the [nuclear] deal could be for the government of the Islamic Republic to adopt a revolutionary and clearer stance."[90]

Although Khamenei allowed the nuclear talks with the Americans to proceed, he similarly warned against wider cooperation with the United States. Two months after the JCPOA was agreed to, the Supreme Leader stated: "We approved talks with the United States about the nuclear issue specifically. We have not allowed talks with the U.S. in other fields, and we will not negotiate with them. . . . The Iranian nation ousted the Satan. We should not let it back through the window."[91] Chairman of the Assembly of Experts, Mohammad Yazdi, concurred, stating in an August 2015 speech at the Assembly: "We should not change our foreign policy of opposition to America, our No. 1 enemy, whose crimes are uncountable."[92]

HOW SHOULD THE UNITED STATES HANDLE IRAN?

The preceding analysis and findings generate clear policy recommendations for American leaders. Most importantly, American decision makers should recognize the great significance that the domestic contest between Iranian conservatives and reformers has for US interests, and then do what they can to strengthen Iranian ideological reformers and moderates and weaken ideological conservatives. In other words, because Iranian reformers and conservatives have prescribed very different policies on the nuclear issue, America has a fundamental security interest in affecting the domestic contest between these factions. This is difficult, but not impossible, to do.

When Iranian conservatives dominate all key political institutions, the United States should adopt hard-line policies, including economic sanctions and forceful deterrent actions. These policies are the most likely to thwart ideological conservatives' provocations, create incentives for more pragmatic conservatives to assert themselves, and provide evidence that reformers can use to demonstrate that their rivals' policies are ineffective and dangerous.

In order to isolate Iran when Iranian conservatives control policymaking, without creating an anti-American, nationalistic reaction to US hard-line policies, US leaders should make it clear that a peaceful resolution of disputes is possible if Iran both makes progress on domestic reforms and adopts more-accommodating foreign policies. Indicating that a "grand bargain" with America is possible even without a full-blown ideological revolution will further boost reformers' and pragmatists' justifications for increased power. Positive incentives, in sum, should accompany strong deterrent actions. Public diplomacy that demonstrates that Iran's international isolation is a result of its policies and that America supports the advancement of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy in Iran are most likely to stimulate domestic debate in Iran in America's favor.

When Iranian reformers possess significant political power (such as controlling the presidency and/or parliament), the United States should adopt cooperative policies that support these politicians (including trade liberalization, the unfreezing of Iranian assets, and the normalization of relations), and American leaders should be willing to match reformers' offers of détente and rapprochement for as long as progress in these areas is being made. Although the Supreme Leader has always been Iran's most powerful decision maker, US leaders do not have to wait for a reformer to capture this position before trying to affect domestic debates and policymaking. Even the Supreme Leader has been susceptible to changing policies to become more accommodating toward the United States when domestic and international incentives have been sufficiently strong. The most important of these domestic incentives for change has been the rising power of reformers and moderates in other political institutions.

Unfortunately, US leaders have frequently not followed these prescriptions, to the detriment of US interests. Because US elites have often believed that the foreign policy differences dividing Iranian conservatives and reformers is slight, they frequently have not tailored their actions according to the relative political power of these ideological groups. This was particularly true of the Bush presidency and in the early years of the Obama administration, and it appears likely to be true of the Trump administration.

To key leaders in the Bush presidency, only a full-blown liberal regime change in Iran could significantly improve relations with America. They felt that in the absence of revolution, the ascension to power of different ideological factions within Iran's ruling circles would have little policy effects. Thus Bush officials claimed that the only meaningful political distinction in Iran from the American point of view was between the illiberal Iranian government (which was bound to be hostile to the United States regardless of factional shifts) and the Iranian people (who would cooperate with the United States once they possessed sufficient power). As one US official said in July 2002, "we have made a conscious decision to associate with the aspirations of the Iranian people. We will not play . . . the factional politics of reform versus hardline."[93] Or as senior White House aide Zalmay Khalilzad stated: "Our policy is not about Khatami or Khamenei, reform or hardline; it is about supporting those [Iranian citizens] who want freedom, human rights, [and] democracy."[94] This thinking also helps explain why Bush in his January 2002 State of the Union address included Iran in the "axis of evil," even though at the time Iranian reformers controlled both the presidency and parliament, and even though Iran was providing the United States important aid in its war in Afghanistan. As Bush explained: "The fact that the president of the United States would stand up and say Iran is just like Iraq and North Korea . . . is part of how you deal with Iran. And that will inspire those who love freedom inside the country."[95]

Hard-liners in the Bush administration had so little faith that Iranian reformers would adopt sufficiently cooperative international policies that some of these individuals rooted for Iranian conservatives to win the 2005 presidential election. They believed that Iranian conservatives were more likely to keep Western states united in their hostility with Iran and that their highly repressive domestic policies would make a revolution in Iran more likely.[96]

The belief that only a liberal revolution in Iran would end enmity with the US shaped the Bush administration's Iranian policies in critical ways. Most important, this view strongly predisposed these leaders against significant engagement in favor of aggressive policies that were designed to provoke a regime change. Thus, for the first five and a half years of his presidency, Bush opposed reducing economic sanctions against Iran, even if that would have helped Iranian reformers or encouraged more accommodating policies. As John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security, succinctly put it: "I don't do carrots."[97] Or as Vice President Dick Cheney explained, the United States does not "negotiate with evil; we defeat it."[98] Because the goal was revolution in Iran, US economic policies that aided the current regime—even when led by reformers—were considered counterproductive.

The Bush administration's hard-line policies toward Iran even when reformers possessed substantial political power undermined this political faction and ultimately US interests. Numerous reformers have claimed that Bush's inclusion of Iran as a member of the "axis of evil" demoralized members of their group and empowered conservatives. Reformers have described Bush's speech as a "betrayal" and a "slap in the face of all those who trusted the USA." To one reformer, the address also strengthened "conservatives' assiduously-used argument that the USA is hostile to Iran." These quotations come from eighteen reformers surveyed in March and April 2002. According to the surveyors, almost all respondents believed that the "axis of evil" speech "had an enormous impact on the tug of war between the conservatives and reformers." There was "a massive consensus that the speech was a godsend to the conservatives, revitalizing the bloodthirsty anti-American rhetoric from the days of the Revolution. The conservatives took the speech as the final proof that their enemy image of the United States had been right all along, and that the reformers, with their wish for dialogue, were naive."[99]

Although Bush's consistent hard-line policies toward Iran helped boost conservatives' domestic position when reformers possessed substantial power, these actions helped advance US interests—including by aiding reformers—after conservatives had reclaimed control of all the key political institutions in Iran after 2005.[100] When the United States and its allies responded forcefully to conservatives' provocations, reformers used these developments to demonstrate the ineffectiveness and dangers created by their domestic rivals' actions. According to a senior Iranian official, during Ahmadinejad's first six months in power, Iranians "who thought [Ahmadinejad's] hardline approach [on the nuclear issue] was a bad choice were staying silent because it appeared to be succeeding."[101] But in March 2006, when the United States succeeded in having the UN Security Council debate sanctions against Iran, opponents of Ahmadinejad's policies felt free to speak out. The actual passage of UN sanctions in December 2006 further "intensified the domestic debate in Iran regarding the nuclear program."[102] In one of many expressions of reformist dissent, Mohsen Armin, spokesman of a reformist party in parliament, stated that "the Security Council sanctions resolution is a clear . . . defeat of Iran's new politicians and their diplomacy. If this policy continues, there is no doubt that it will fail and bring about harmful consequences."[103] The increased pressure that reformers applied in the aftermath of UN sanctions may have had some effects on Iranian politics. Some hard-liners were removed from power in 2007, including Deputy Interior Minister Mojtaba Hashemi Samarah, one of Ahmadinejad's closest allies, and Yahya Rahim Safavi, the IRGC's commander since 1997.[104]

The Obama administration, especially during the first years of the presidency, made mistakes similar to the Bush administration's, and for identical reasons. To begin with, Obama agreed with Bush that the international policy differences between Iranian conservatives and reformers were slight. In a June 2009 interview, Obama stated that from a national security perspective, there was little difference for America if the hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or the reformer Mir Hussein Mousavi won the 2009 presidential election. "Either way," asserted Obama, the United States is "going to be dealing with an Iranian regime that has historically been hostile to the United States, that has caused some problems in the neighborhood and is pursuing nuclear weapons."[105] Indeed, in this view, because Iranian reformers and conservatives were likely to pursue similar international policies toward America despite their domestic differences, in some ways it was better for the United States to have Iranian conservatives win the election. As a senior Obama official told the *Wall Street Journal*: "Had there been a transition to a new government [if Mousavi won], a new president wouldn't have emerged until August. In some respects, [Ahmadinejad's victory] might allow Iran to engage the international community quicker."[106]

Unlike the Bush administration—which adopted hard-line policies toward Iran with no regard for the relative power of Iranian reformers and conservatives—the Obama administration, at least for its first year in office, advocated accommodating actions regardless of domestic developments in Iran. In other words, neither president adjusted policies to the key ideological factions in power in Iran. Despite Iranian conservatives' clear political dominance during the early years of the Obama presidency, the overall tenor of officials' statements toward Iran throughout 2009 was one of outreach and engagement. The president himself made a number of important conciliatory gestures that were designed to reduce hostilities. Two months after his inauguration, Obama sent a videotaped message directly to the Iranians in which he referred to Iran as "the Islamic Republic of Iran," a nod to the legitimacy of the Iranian Islamist revolution and an unusual step for a president of the United States. Obama offered the promise of a "new day" in US-Iranian relations that would allow for "renewed exchanges among our people, and greater opportunities for partnership and commerce." The process of improving relations, Obama said, "will not be advanced by threats. We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect."[107]

Instead of reciprocating this outreach, Iranian conservatives responded to this and similar overtures with contempt and threats. This is not surprising given conservatives' continued intense ideology-based enmity toward the United States. In reaction to Obama's message, Supreme Leader Khamenei claimed that there was no change in US-Iranian relations and that Obama had "insulted the Islamic Republic of Iran from the first day."[108] After his reelection in June 2009, President Ahmadinejad stated that "without a doubt, Iran's new government will have a more decisive and firmer approach toward the West" to make the West regret its "meddlesome stance" toward Iranian politics.[109] This and similar statements came after Obama showed considerable restraint in criticizing both the major irregularities in the June 2009 Iranian presidential election, likely including fraud, and the subsequent violent crackdown on popular protests of the election's results, and even though Obama promised to continue to engage Iran despite these developments.[110] By the fall of 2009, Khamenei and other ideological conservatives had labeled Obama's outreach policies as ones of "soft war" (i.e., efforts at ideological subversion) that were in some ways more dangerous than the Bush administration's conventional threats.[111] These charges continued into 2010.[112]

After Obama's outreach policies to Iran in 2009 failed to achieve a breakthrough on the nuclear issue, his administration switched tactics. Beginning in 2010, the United States spearheaded a series of punishing multilateral sanctions against Iran. These sanctions had devastating effects on Iran's economy, including hyperinflation, the loss of tens of billions of dollars annually in trade, the plummeting in value of Iran's currency, and large-scale unemployment.[113] By 2012, Iran's annual inflation rate was over 40 percent, which was one of the highest in the world, and its economy was in recession, with a GDP growth rate of −1.9 percent.[114] The steep deterioration of Iran's economy created a potentially revolutionary situation. Iranian leaders at this time were likely to be especially sensitive to this danger given that 2011 was the height of the Arab Spring uprisings, with authoritarians in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya forced from power, largely due to the effects of popular protests.[115]

In addition to having a major impact on Iran's economy, sanctions also had two major political effects that advanced US interests. First, the economic pain that sanctions created intensified the incentives for Iranian leaders, including conservatives, to negotiate with the Americans over the nuclear issue. For many conservatives, nuclear weapons' primary purpose was to ensure regime survival against the military threat posed by the United States. The major costs created by the sanctions, though, were also threatening regime stability. Conservatives thus increasingly faced a dilemma: Should they negotiate with the Americans over nuclear weapons in order to alleviate the sanctions-based danger to the regime, or should they live with the pain of sanctions in order to develop nuclear weapons, thereby countering the military threat posed by US (and Israeli) forces? Members of the Iranian right were divided over what was the better answer to this question. Although many remained committed to the continuation of Iran's nuclear program despite the pain of sanctions, some prominent conservatives who in the past had been fierce defenders of Iran's need to develop its nuclear program began to question this position. According to the scholar David Menashri,

> Even Ali Akbar Velayati, who served as foreign minister for 16 years (1981–1997) and has since served as Khamenei's advisor on international matters, complained about the isolation Iran imposed on itself and went so far as to protest publicly how negotiations with the West on the nuclear program were handled (a subject until now [2013] considered taboo). . . . Velayati expressed his criticism of fellow [presidential] candidate Saeed Jalili's handling of the negotiations even as late as in early 2013: "You want to take three steps and you expect the other side to take 100 steps, this means that you don't want to make progress. . . . You have been in charge of the nuclear issue, we have not made a step forward, and the [sanctions] pressure has been exerted on the people."[116]

The net effect of this split was growing tensions within Iran's right. As a February 2012 *New York Times* article summarized:

> The rising economic panic [created by sanctions] has illustrated—and possibly intensified—the bitter divisions within Iran's political elite. A number of insiders, including members of the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, have begun openly criticizing Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in recent weeks. One of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's aides indirectly accused Ayatollah Khamenei of needlessly antagonizing the West in ways that pushed down the rial's value, the latest sign of a rift between the president and the supreme leader that is helping to define the parliamentary elections, which are scheduled for March 2.[117]

The second major political effect that the Obama administration's sanctions had on Iran is that they helped the moderate Rouhani win the 2013 presidential elections. Sanctions helped bring about this outcome by sowing dissension among conservatives and by giving credence to moderates' and reformers' claims that conservatives' policies were leading Iran to disaster. Perhaps most importantly, the economic pain created by sanctions likely helped to increase Supreme Leader Khamenei's concerns about the viability of the regime. To block reformist and moderates from the presidency—as was done in the fraudulent 2009 election—during such a period, and especially when the Iranian people were widely supportive of negotiating over the nuclear issue in order to end sanctions, would likely have increased the forces for revolution.[118]

The coming to power of someone with different ideological beliefs than conservatives was likely a necessary condition to reach a diplomatic solution to the nuclear crisis. Rouhani's victory added significant domestic pressure for talks with the Americans to the existing external incentives created by sanctions. Sanctions had led some conservatives to advocate negotiations. There remained, though, sufficiently strong opposition to this outcome that little movement had been made toward it. The incentives created by sanctions alone, in other words, were not sufficient to result in policy change.

It was only after the election of an ideological moderate, backed by a reformist coalition, to a key institution of power that outreach to the United States gathered momentum. This was not a coincidence. Rouhani's more moderate ideological beliefs and especially those of his reformist supporters meant that the threshold for him to advocate negotiating with the United States over the nuclear issue was considerably lower than it was for ideological conservatives.

The domestic pressure created by Rouhani and his supporters, combined with the external incentives created by sanctions, was likely critical in achieving Khamenei's acquiescence to the negotiations. The Supreme Leader was not an enthusiastic supporter of the talks, and he repeatedly criticized both the United States and Rouhani while they were proceeding. He did, though, allow them to continue, thereby giving Rouhani political cover from other conservatives' opposition. Again, the fear that thwarting Rouhani and the coalition he represented on an issue that was very popular would compromise regime stability likely played an important role in the Supreme Leader's calculations. If external pressure alone were sufficient to induce Khamenei to support nuclear talks with the United States, negotiations very likely would have started before Rouhani's election.

Rouhani's electoral victory increased the incentives not only for Iran to negotiate a resolution to the nuclear crisis but for the Americans to do so as well. If sanctions and external pressure were solely responsible for bringing Iran to the table, an intractable problem was created. As Menashri puts it: "There is an objective difficulty stemming from the basic interest of each of the sides. If Iran is willing to make concessions, it stems largely from the pressure applied to it, and Iran's main concern is to remove or at least ease the sanctions. The West's interest is, theoretically, diametrically opposed: why should Iran's strongest incentive for a compromise be nullified?"[119]

The fact that Rouhani was a moderate who led a reformist coalition created an opportunity for US leaders to resolve this conundrum. Reformers' ideological beliefs created a basis for resolving the nuclear dispute for reasons that were independent of the external pressure created by sanctions. Consequently, the Obama administration had incentives to support cooperative policies toward Iran even though they would weaken the sanctions regime. These outcomes could give a political boost to the moderate/reformist coalition, the continued success of which would increase the likelihood that US-Iranian cooperation would be placed on a more stable foundation.[120]

Leaders in the Obama administration recognized these relationships, indicating that an important effect of the deal was that it would, as Obama put it, likely "strengthen the hand of those more moderate forces inside of Iran."[121] This belief was not unreasonable. Iranian conservatives are worried about precisely this relationship.[122] Moreover, there has already been some evidence that indicates that increased cooperation with the United States has helped reformers and moderates, who, in turn, have argued for the continued improvement of relations. Reformers and moderates did well in the 2016 parliamentary elections, as well as in the 2016 elections for the Assembly of Experts, which picks the Supreme Leader (though a hard-liner was still elected to lead this institution).[123] Rouhani has also frequently stated that he hopes to use the nuclear accord as a springboard to further cooperation, and the results of these elections should help achieve this objective.[124]

CONCLUSION

The success of the strategy of attempting to aid particular ideological factions in Iran is far from guaranteed. Not only do Iranian conservatives continue to wield greater overall political power than reformers and moderates—even if conservatives' relative power has shrunk in recent years—but it appears very unlikely that the Trump administration will adopt cooperative policies toward Iran despite the progress that reformers and moderates have made since 2013. A return to high levels of confrontation with little to no cooperation will help discredit reformers' and moderates' claims about the possibility of a better relationship with the United States. In that case, a conservative consolidation in the Islamic Republic is likely to occur once again, to the detriment of US interests.

Notes

1. For a more extensive development of the argument and findings presented in this chapter, see Mark L. Haas, *The Clash of Ideologies: Middle Eastern Politics and American Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), ch. 2; and Mark L. Haas, "Missed Ideological Opportunities and George W. Bush's Middle Eastern Policies," *Security Studies* 21, no. 3 (September 2012): 416–454. Parts of this chapter are drawn from these sources.

2. See Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

3. For other scholars who adopt this taxonomy, see David Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society, and Power* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); Shahram Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006); Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Consolidation in Iran," *Survival* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 175–190; Daniel Heradstveit and G. Matthew Bonham, "What the Axis of Evil Metaphor Did to Iran," *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 421–440.

4. Among the most powerful conservative leaders in the period under analysis were Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (Supreme Leader of the Revolution), Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (president of Iran), Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati (head of the Council of Guardians and later chair of the Assembly of Experts), Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi (head of the judicial system and later chair of the Assembly of Experts), Yahya Rahim-Safavi (commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), Mohsen Rezai (secretary of the Expediency Council and former commander in chief of the IRGC), Ali-Akbar Velayati (adviser to the Supreme Leader on foreign affairs and former minister of foreign affairs), and Mohammad Jafari (commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps).

5. Quoted in Ray Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (New York: Times Books, 2006), 36. See also Meir Litvak, "Iran: The Clerical Debate on Democracy and Islam," in Joshua Teitelbaum, ed., *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 275.

6. Litvak, "Iran," 272–274.

7. Quoted in Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 235.

8. Quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, 108.

9. Leading reformers in the period included Mohammad Khatami (president of Iran), Abdol Karim Soroush (a leading scholar and philosophical inspiration to many reformers), Ataollah Mohajerani (minister of culture and Islamic guidance), Abdollah Nuri (vice president), and Mehdi Karrubi (speaker of parliament) and Mir Hussein Mousavi (prime minister). See Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, 128–148, 175–179; Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy / Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2000), 150, 202; Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran*, 149–150. Hasan Rouhani, who became president in 2013, was an ideological moderate who led a reformist coalition.

10. Quoted in Litvak, "Iran," 278.

11. Ibid., 277. As one study of Iranian politics puts this point, reformers "synthesized Islamic moral concepts with modern Enlightenment political philosophy to argue that there was no inherent tension between democracy and Islamic society." Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009), 15; see also Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of the Neoconservatives: The Politics of Tehran's Silent Revolution* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 10.

12. Quoted in Litvak, "Iran," 290–291. On the preceding points, see 290, 292, 298.

13. Ibid., 297.

14. Ibid.

15. Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, 132; Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 175–176; Ehteshami and Zweiri, *Iran and the Rise of the Neoconservatives*, xiv.

16. Quoted in Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini*, 233.

17. Ibid.

18. Quoted in Litvak, "Iran," 277.

19. "Abdolkarim Soroush: The Goals of Iran's Green Movement," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 6, 2010.

20. For details, see Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?*, chs. 1–8.

21. For details, see Elliot Hen-Tov and Nathan Gonzalez, "The Militarization of Post-Khomeini Iran: Praetorianism 2.0," *Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 45–59.

22. Clifton W. Sherrill, "Why Hassan Rouhani Won Iran's 2013 Presidential Election," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 65.

23. There are conflicting predictions as to which way independents are likely to vote. See "Iran Elections: Hardliners Lose Parliament to Rouhani Allies," BBC News, April 30, 2016; Thomas Erdbrink, "Rouhani Backers Gain Iran Parliamentary Seats, but Not Majority," *New York Times*, April 30, 2016.

24. See Maximilian Terhalle, "Revolutionary Power and Socialization: Explaining the Persistence of Revolutionary Zeal in Iran's Foreign Policy," *Security Studies* 18, no. 3 (July 2009): 576–577.

25. Wehrey et al., *Rise of the Pasdaran*, 83.

26. For details, see Gheissari and Nasr, "Conservative Consolidation."

27. Both quoted in Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran*, 84.

28. Both quotations from Karim Sadjadpour, *Reading Khamenei: The World View of Iran's Most Powerful Leader* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008), 15.

29. Saeid Golkar, "Iran's Revolutionary Guard: Its Views of the United States," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 54; also 62, fn. 13.

30. Quoted in Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran*, 214. See also Wehrey et al., *Rise of the Pasdaran*, 32, 37–38.

31. Quoted in Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran*, 214.

32. Ibid., 83.

33. Ibid., 214.

34. Quoted in Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, 109.

35. "Supreme Leader's Meeting with Thousands of Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Commanders," *Karbala*, September 18, 2015, http://english.almaaref.org/essaydetails.php?eid=5279&cid=614.

36. Golkar, "Iran's Revolutionary Guard," 54–58.

37. Both quotations from Sadjadpour, *Reading Khamenei*, 17 and 18, respectively. See also Golkar, "Iran's Revolutionary Guard," 54.

38. Quoted in Shahram Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics, and National Security* (Oxford: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002), 24.

39. Quoted in Michael Slackman, "If America Wanted to Talk, Iran Would," *New York Times*, September 3, 2006, 4.4.

40. Quoted in Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran,* 186.

41. CNN, "Transcript of Interview with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami," January 7, 1998, http://tinyurl.com/6y8rumz.

42. Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Iran's International Posture after the Fall of Baghdad," *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 183.

43. Conservatives denounced this position as treasonous. As Daniel Brumberg explains, conservatives "held that the very survival of the country's Islamic revolution hinged on maintaining an ideological wall between Iran and the United States. Armed with this sacred conviction, they concluded that the reformist push for rapprochement was part of a conspiracy to destroy the Islamic Republic of Iran." (Daniel Brumberg, "End of a Brief Affair? The United States and Iran," *Policy Brief,* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 14, 2002, 3, http://tinyurl.com/4nc6bqm.) An editorial in *Jumhuri-ye Islami*, for example, stated that "the attempt to inculcate the proposition that negotiation with the US is the key to the solution of problems is an act of treason." (Quoted in Hossein S. Seifzadeh, "The Landscape of Factional Politics and Its Future in Iran," *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 1 (Winter 2003), 73.

44. Quoted in Ray Takeyh, "Iran: Scared Straight?" *PolicyWatch,* Policy #622, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 3, 2002, http://tinyurl.com/4bcys4c.

45. Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, "The Beloved Great Satan: The Portrayal of the US in the Iranian Media Since 9/11," *Vaseteh: Journal of European Society for Iranian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2005): 64, 71.

46. As the scholar Farideh Farhi expresses this point, "Reformists [claimed] that Iran would not be in such a precarious position [with the US] had there not been a conservative assault on elective institutions and the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people." Farideh Farhi, "Iran's Nuclear File: The Uncertain Endgame," *Middle East Report Online*, October 24, 2005, 9.

47. David Menashri, "Hassan Rouhani: Iran's New Hope for Change," *Strategic Assessment* 16, no. 2 (July 2013): 10; Masoud Kazemzadeh, "Hassan Rouhani's Election and Its Consequences for American Foreign Policy," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 36, no. 2 (2014): 129.

48. "Rouhani's First One Hundred Days: Cautious Domestic Reforms as Nuclear Crisis Continues," Atlantic Council, November 20, 2013; Thomas Erdbrink, "Iran's Next Leader Advocates a Less Intrusive State," *New York Times*, July 3, 2013.

49. Kazemzadeh, "Hassan Rouhani's Election," 129.

50. Menashri, "Hassan Rouhani," 12–13.

51. Quoted in Daniel Arkin, "Who Is Iran's New President? Nine Things You Need to Know About Rouhani," *NBC News*, June 17, 2013.

52. Hassan Dai, "Hassan Rohani and Javad Zarif's Work Plan," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 36, no. 1 (2014): 8

53. Ibid., 7; Thomas Erdbrink, "Iran's Leaders Signal Effort at New Thaw," *New York Times*, September 18, 2013.

54. Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 33.

55. Ibid.

56. Quoted in Colin Dueck and Ray Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Challenge," *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 2 (2007): 193.

57. Quoted in Sadjadpour, *Reading Khamenei*, 14.

58. Quoted in Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 76.

59. Quoted in Ali Parchami, "American Culpability: The Bush Administration and the Iranian Nuclear Impasses," *Contemporary Politics* 20, no. 3 (2014): 327.

60. Quoted in "Turkish, Iranian Presidents Want Diplomatic Solution of Iran's Nuclear Issue," BBC Monitoring Europe, August 15, 2008.

61. Iran when Ahmadinejad was president did agree to an accord that was brokered by Turkey and Brazil that would have sent some of Iran's low-enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for nuclear fuel for a research reactor. The Obama administration rejected the deal as insufficient, however, and some analysts concluded that it was less ambitious than an offer that Iran rejected in 2009 largely due to conservative opposition. See "Iran's Proposed LEU deal: Skeptical but Awaiting Clarification," Institute for Science and International Security, May 17, 2010.

62. A similar variation existed regarding Iranian leaders' views of American policies in the Middle East and South Asia, including the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. See Haas, *Clash of Ideologies*, ch. 2; Mark L. Haas, "Ideology and Iran's American Policies, 1997–2008," in David W. Lesch and Mark L. Haas, eds., *The Middle East and the United States: History, Politics, and Ideologies,* revised 5th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014), 416–437.

63. Ray Takeyh, "Iran Builds the Bomb," *Survival* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2004–2005): 56; Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 32; Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 378–379.

64. Quoted in Menashri, "Hassan Rouhani," 18.

65. Quoted in Pollack, *Persian Puzzle*, 318.

66. Quoted in Shahram Chubin and Robert S. Litwak, "Debating Iran's Nuclear Aspirations," *Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (Autumn 2003), 105.

67. Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, "Factional Positions on the Nuclear Issue in the Context of Iranian Domestic Politics," *Iran Analysis Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (January-March 2006): 2–3.

68. Chubin and Litwak, "Debating Iran's Nuclear Aspirations," 105.

69. Quoted in Menashri, "Hassan Rouhani," 11.

70. Thomas Erdbrink, "Iran's Leaders Signal Effort at New Thaw," *New York Times*, September 18, 2013.

71. Both quotations from Jeffrey Fleishman and Ramin Mostaghim, "Disclosure of Secret Nuclear Plant Further Divides Iran's Hard-liners, Opposition," *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 2009.

72. Quoted in Bill Keller and Michael Slackman, "Leader Emerges with Stronger Hand," *New York Times*, June 15, 2009.

73. Chubin, *Whither Iran?,* 69, 84.

74. Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 8; Pollack, *Persian Puzzle*, 362.

75. These policies were strongly opposed by many Iranian conservatives. See Karl Vick, "Iranian Hard-Liners Wary of Nuclear Deal," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2003; and Mehran Kamrava, "Iranian National-Security Debates: Factionalism and Lost Opportunities," *Middle East Policy* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 84–100. For details on Iran's covert nuclear weapons program that was made public in 2002, see International Crisis Group, *Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Program*, Middle East Report No. 18, October 27, 2003.

76. Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, xiv–xx; International Crisis Group, *Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Program*.

77. For details, see Parchami, "American Culpability," 321.

78. Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, xiv–xx.

79. The document defined "nuclear weapons program" as "Iran's nuclear weapon design and weaponization work and covert uranium conversion-related and uranium enrichment-related work; we do not mean Iran's declared civil work related to uranium conversion and enrichment." See National Intelligence Estimate, "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities," November 2007, https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Press%20Releases/2007%20Press%20Releases/20071203_release.pdf. Other analysts, including some in the Bush and Obama administrations and the IAEA, questioned the accuracy of these assessments. See

David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "IAEA Suspects Iranian Nuclear Weapons Activity," *New York Times*, February 19, 2010.

80. Parchami, "American Culpability," 323, 325.

81. Jenny Booth, "Iran Nuclear Plant Restarts Processing Uranium," *Times Online*, August 8, 2005.

82. Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, xviii–xx.

83. Chubin and Litwak, "Debating Iran's Nuclear Aspirations," 105; Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 29–30.

84. Quoted in Farideh Farhi, "To Have or Not to Have? Iran's Domestic Debate on Nuclear Options," in Geoffrey Kemp, ed., *Iran's Nuclear Weapons Options: Issues and Analysis* (Washington, DC: Nixon Center, 2001), 35–36.

85. Quoted in Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 56; see also Vick, "Iranian Hard-Liners Wary of Nuclear Deal."

86. Quoted in Dueck and Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Challenge," 195. See also Wehrey et al., *Rise of the Pasdaran*, 87.

87. Quoted in Akbar Ganji, "The Latter-Day Sultan: Power and Politics in Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, November-December 2008, 52, 64, 58.

88. For details, see Graham Allison, "Is Iran Still Israel's Top Threat? How the Nuclear Agreement Looks in the Country Where Its Consequences Are the Gravest," *The Atlantic*, March 8, 2016. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other civilian leaders do not share this optimistic assessment.

89. Quoted in Bernd Kaussler, "Giving Diplomacy a Chance: US-Iranian Relations and the Joint Plan of Action," *Orient* 44, no. 2 (2014), 44.

90. Quoted in Thomas Erdbrink, "U.S. Remains the 'Great Satan,' Hard-Liners in Iran Say," *New York Times*, September 1, 2015.

91. Quoted in Nasser Karimi, "Iran's Top Leader: No Talks with US Outside Nuclear Deal," Associated Press, September 9, 2015.

92. Quoted in Erdbrink, "U.S. Remains the 'Great Satan.'"

93. Quoted in Daniel Brumberg, "Dilemmas of Western Policies Towards Iran," *International Spectator* 3 (2002): 78. See also Takeyh, *Hidden Iran,* 129.

94. Quoted in Takeyh, *Hidden Iran,* 129.

95. Quoted in Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 88.

96. Guy Dinmore and Roula Khalaf, "U.S. Hawks Rooting for Hardline Iranian Candidate," *Financial Times*, June 24, 2005.

97. Quoted in Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 89.

98. Quoted in Parchami, "American Culpability," 317.

99. Heradstveit and Bonham, "What the Axis of Evil Metaphor Did to Iran," 434–437. See also Kamal Nazer Yasin, "U.S. Hard-Line Policies Helped Bring About Reformists' Demise in Iran," *Eurasia Insight*, March 8, 2004.

100. Although hard-line policies were the dominant tactic used by the Bush administration, after Iranian conservatives had reasserted their dominance, US officials did try to initiate talks to resolve the nuclear dispute. These efforts backfired, and predictably so based on the framework developed in this chapter. As Parchami summarizes, outreach by the Bush administration "bolstered the belief of hard-liners in Tehran that the perceived weakness of the Khatami presidency had emboldened the Americans while Iranian successes in Iraq and Afghanistan had forced the Bush Administration to approach the Islamic Republic from a noticeably more humble position. With the likely outcome of the wars favoring Iran, Tehran no longer felt compelled to engage with the Americans at any diplomatic level." (Parchami, "American Culpability," 319).

101. Michael Slackman, "In Iran, Dissenting Voices Rise on Its Leaders' Nuclear Strategy," *New York Times*, March 15, 2006.

102. Yossi Mansharof, "Iranian Domestic Criticism of Iran's Nuclear Strategy," Middle East Media Research Institute, January 14, 2007, https://www.memri.org/reports/iranian-domestic-criticism-irans-nuclear-strategy.

103. Quoted in ibid., 6.

104. Michael Jacobson, "Sanctions Against Iran: A Promising Struggle," *Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 79. It is not inevitable that Western hard-line policies hurt conservatives' interests, however. As explained above, some Iranian conservatives have welcomed diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, and international tensions because these outcomes reduce the chances of ideological subversion, confirm the "enemy image" of the West, and justify domestic oppression as necessary in order to confront an external threat. A key way to help ensure that Iran's isolation hurts conservatives' interests instead of helping them is for Western states to offer major benefits along with penalties. Western leaders, in other words, should make clear that specific policies implemented by Iranian hard-liners are the cause of Iran's isolation, and if Iran rejected aggressive foreign policies while making progress on domestic reforms, not only would sanctions end but important new benefits would be forthcoming. The US could also engage in "smart sanctions" that selectively target the interests of Iranian leaders as opposed to those of ordinary citizens.

105. Quoted in Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, "For Obama, Pressure to Strike a Firmer Tone," *New York Times*, June 18, 2009.

106. Quoted in Jay Solomon and Chip Cummins, "Iran's Election Results Stoke Global Debate," *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2009.

107. All quotations from Alan Cowell, "In a Video Appeal to Iran, Obama Offers a 'New Day,'" *New York Times,* March 21, 2009.

108. Quoted in "Iran's Supreme Leader Dismisses Obama Overtures," Associated Press, March 21, 2009.

109. Quoted in Thomas Erdbrink and William Branigin, "Iran's President Rebukes Obama," *Washington Post*, June 28, 2009.

110. Mark Landler, "U.S. Officials to Continue to Engage Iran," *New York Times*, June 13, 2009.

111. Robert F. Worth, "Iran Expanding Effort to Stifle the Opposition," *New York Times*, November 24, 2009.

112. "Obama Offer Is Denounced by Ayatollah," Associated Press, March 21, 2010.

113. John Allen Gray, "Let's Make a Deal," *National Interest* (May/June 2014), 47; Mohamed El-Khawas, "Obama's Engagement Strategy with Iran: Limited Results," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 107–110; Erdbrink, "Iran's Leaders Signal Effort at New Thaw."

114. Kazemzadeh, "Hassan Rouhani's Election," 135.

115. On this fear, see Narges Bajoghli and Arang Keshavarzian, "Iran and the Arab Uprisings," in Mark L. Haas and David W. Lesch, *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprisings* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2017), 174–193.

116. Menashri, "Hassan Rouhani," 17–18.

117. Robert F. Worth, "Iran's Middle Class on Edge as World Presses In," *New York Times*, February 6, 2012. See also Dai, "Hassan Rohani and Javad Zarif's Work Plan," 7–8.

118. For similar analysis, see Steven Hurst, "The Iranian Nuclear Negotiations as a Two-Level Game: The Importance of Domestic Politics," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27, no. 3 (2016): 553–554. In July 2012, Iran's state-run television reported, perhaps by mistake, on its website the results of a poll indicating that 64 percent of Iranians favored stopping uranium enrichment in exchange for the gradual removal of sanctions. This was the opposite view of then-president

Ahmadinejad. Rick Gladstone and Thomas Erdbrink, “Iran Nuclear Talks Are to Continue as Their Tone Heats Up,” *New York Times*, July 4, 2012.

119. Menashri, “Hassan Rouhani,” 18.

120. For those hawkish US leaders who believed that sanctions alone were responsible for bringing Iran to the negotiating table, there was little hope of escaping the dilemma presented in the previous paragraph. If sanctions were the only key to more cooperative behavior by Iranian leaders, the US would be unwise to relax them. This thinking was at the heart of much of the US opposition to the 2015 nuclear accord.

121. Quoted in Steve Inskeep, “Obama Compares Iran Deal to a House Under Contract, Awaiting Appraisal,” NPR, April 7, 2015.

122. Head of the IRGC Jafari stated in April 2016 that many of those who supported the 2015 nuclear accord were “taking the road to counter-revolution.” To Jafari, “political ideas that contradict the Islamic revolution will not last . . . even if at a certain moment they might take control of the government and parliament. . . . The new Westernised trend in Iran is formed by American infiltration elements” that would be defeated by the Guards and “revolutionary forces within the country.” “Head of Iran Revolutionary Guards Warns Against Nuclear Deal ‘Model,’” *Arab Weekly*, April 5, 2016, http://www.thearabweekly.com/MENA-Now/4543/Head-of-Iran-Revolutionary-Guards-warns-against-nuclear-deal-model.

123. Erdbrink, “Rouhani Backers Gain Iran Parliamentary Seats, but Not Majority;” “Iran Elections: Reformists Make Gains in Assembly of Experts,” BBC News, February 29, 2016; Thomas Erdbrink, “Powerful Council in Iran Selects Hard-Liner as Chairman,” *New York Times*, May 24, 2016. There has been some increased, if limited, domestic liberalization accompanying reformers’ increased power in parliament. Thomas Erdbrink, “For Iran, Exerting Force While Making Nice Is Part of the Plan,” *New York Times*, October 25, 2016.

124. As Rouhani put it in a September 2015 speech at the United Nations: “From our point of view, the agreed-upon deal is not the final objective but a development which can and should be the basis of further achievements to come.” (Quoted in Rick Gladstone, “Iranian’s U.N. Speech Appears to Favor Engagement,” *New York Times*, September 27, 2015.) In a February 2017 speech indicating intent to seek reelection, Rouhani, according to a Reuters summary, “said his government stood for opening Iran up to the outside world while his opponents sought confrontation and isolation. . . . ‘We should talk to the world, engage and cooperate with it.’” (“Iran’s Rouhani Chides Critics as Aide Says He Will Seek Re-election,” Reuters, February 26, 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-rouhani-election-idUSKBN1650F8.)

CHAPTER 19

THE UNITED STATES' POST-9/11 FIGHT AGAINST AL-QA'IDA AND THE ISLAMIC STATE

A Losing Effort in Search of a Change

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States strategically prioritized its fight against transnational jihadist organizations, especially al-Qa'ida and the organization it birthed in Iraq, the Islamic State (popularly known as ISIS). Fifteen years later, it is obvious, even judging solely from the naked eye, that the fight against jihadism is not going well. Despite ISIS's significant territorial losses, jihadists now enjoy more geographic safe havens than they possessed at the time of the 9/11 attacks. They govern more territory, imposing their inflexible and unforgiving brand of *shari'a* (Islamic law) in parts of multiple countries. More states have fallen into total or partial collapse in places where jihadist groups played a major role in their downward spiral. Jihadists have taken advantage of the social media revolution and boom in end-to-end encryption to grow far more proficient at guiding terrorist attacks throughout the world. And perhaps of greatest concern, jihadism has grown into a popular movement that is increasingly difficult to displace.

To some extent, the problems involved in confronting the threat of jihadism relate to the growing difficulty of staving off entropy in the international system. Factors unrelated to the so-called war on terror, such as technological advances, environmental degradation, and resource shortages, have made governance more difficult.[1] Jihadist groups are extraordinarily adept at exploiting ungoverned territory and state failure, and they may have been able to exploit these factors even in the absence of major errors in the fight against them. But the US and its allies also have made significant strategic errors. The lack of success that the world's most powerful states have experienced in their fight against jihadist violent nonstate actors (VNSAs) raises a deeper question: Is the US government configured to competently address the growing challenge posed by VNSAs? Or have we been trying to fight a twenty-first-century challenge with twentieth-century governmental architecture?

This chapter explores the post-9/11 history of the United States' engagement with jihadist actors: the fight against al-Qa'ida; the explosive growth of Salafi jihadism following the Arab uprisings; ISIS's birth as an independent organization; and the resulting skirmish between al-Qa'ida and ISIS for dominance over the jihadist movement. Contrary to many observers' initial expectations about this competition, al-Qa'ida ended up turning ISIS's emergence into a strategic opportunity, pivoting off of ISIS's brutality and doubling down on a more low-profile and sustainable approach to growth. This allowed al-Qa'ida to quietly, yet relatively rapidly, gain ground in conflict zones across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where the group has managed to both seize some territory and also embed itself within local communities.

AL-QA'IDA'S SALAFI JIHADIST VISION

Al-Qa'ida was founded in 1988, in the waning days of the Afghan-Soviet war. At the time, Osama bin Laden and his mentor, the Palestinian militant Abdullah Azzam, agreed that the organization they had built during the conflict should not simply dissolve when the war ended. Rather, they wanted the structure they had created to serve as "the base" *(al-Qa'ida)* for future efforts.

Though al-Qa'ida's original mission focused on the threat that Communism posed to the *umma* (worldwide community of Muslims), the presence of American troops on Saudi Arabian soil following Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait turned bin Laden's focus toward the United States. After returning to Afghanistan in 1996 to use the country as a safe haven, bin Laden issued a couple of manifestos proclaiming himself at war with the world's only remaining superpower. Bin Laden's central grievance in his first declaration of war was the US military presence in Saudi Arabia, which he described as "one of the worst catastrophes to befall the Muslims since the death of the Prophet."[2] Bin Laden also named America's support for Israel and US-led sanctions against Saddam's regime in Iraq as additional justifications for his fight. (Bin Laden's criticism of the sanctions focused on their humanitarian impact.) Though bin Laden's articulated grievances were political in nature, al-Qa'ida cannot be understood without reference to its Salafi jihadist outlook.

Salafism—a term referring to the "pious predecessors"—can be defined broadly as a movement striving for a practice of Islam that its adherents believe best represents the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of Muslims. Salafism is not monolithic—it possesses both nonviolent and violent variants, and Salafi jihadism falls within the latter category. As scholar Quintan Wiktorowicz notes, Salafi jihadists "take a more militant position" than other Salafi strains, believing "that the current context calls for violence and revolution."[3]

Al-Qa'ida's religious outlook shaped both the group's immediate grievances, such as those articulated in bin Laden's declaration of war, and also its more expansive goals. As Michael Scheuer, the former head of the CIA's Bin Laden Unit, has written, the political grievances in bin Laden's declaration of war were intended to place al-Qa'ida's fight within the realm of "a defensive jihad sanctioned by the revealed word of God."[4] That is, in contrast to an "offensive jihad," or expansionist warfare designed to enlarge the abode of Islam, bin Laden framed this as a case where the faith itself was under attack. In such circumstances, each Muslim has an individual obligation to join the battle.

But in al-Qa'ida's vision, the group is not constrained to defensive jihad. One of its goals is forcibly imposing *shari'a* (Islamic law). For example, jihadist strategist Abu al-Harith al-Ansari wrote in an essay posted to Ansar al-Mujahideen Network, a jihadist web forum, in February 2011 that the implementation of *shari'a* was a critical religious obligation, as "the duty of Muslims is to rule Muslims by Islam."[5] A militant's notebook that Reuters journalists unearthed from the site of an al-Qa'ida leadership camp near the Yemeni town of al-Mahfad memorializes similar goals: "Establishing an Islamic state that rules by Islamic *shari'a* law."[6] Both bin Laden and his replacement as al-Qa'ida's emir, Ayman al-Zawahiri, repeatedly emphasized the importance of establishing *shari'a*.[7] Al-Qa'ida's goal of imposing religious law is rooted in its Salafi jihadist outlook, specifically the religious concept of *tawhid* (unity of God), meaning that if only Allah can be worshiped and obeyed, then only Allah's laws have legitimacy.[8]

An even more ambitious goal of al-Qa'ida's is reestablishment of the caliphate, a theocratic government that would rule a united Muslim world. Zawahiri has written that the group's "intended goal in this age is the establishment of a caliphate in the manner of the Prophet."[9] (ISIS also shares this goal, and it famously claimed to have reestablished the caliphate in June 2014. However, al-Qa'ida assessed ISIS's declaration as extremely premature.)

THE 9/11 ATTACKS AND THE US RESPONSE

Taking advantage of the safe haven provided by the fundamentalist Taliban movement, al-Qa'ida grew significantly during its time in Afghanistan. The jihadist group established a powerful network of militant training camps, and perhaps as many as twenty thousand people trained in them.[10] It also developed connections to other militant organizations and grew its insurgent and terrorist capabilities.

Al-Qa'ida carried out two deadly terrorist attacks against the United States prior to 9/11. On August 7, 1998, near-simultaneous truck bombs destroyed the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing 212 (12 of whom were Americans) and injuring more than 5,000 people. On October 12, 2000, a suicide bombing struck the destroyer USS *Cole* in the Yemeni port of Aden, killing seventeen American sailors and wounding thirty-nine. But the group's crowning achievement was the notorious 9/11 attacks. Those attacks were both tactically brilliant and devastating, killing almost three thousand on US soil while shattering previous assumptions about terrorism—the idea that terrorists wanted a lot of people watching but not a lot of people dead—and making the world suddenly seem much less safe.

In response, on October 7, 2001, the United States began a bombing campaign against the Taliban, which refused to hand bin Laden over for trial. When it inserted troops into Afghanistan later in the month, America employed a decidedly light footprint. About 300 Special Forces soldiers and 110 CIA officers liaised with tens of thousands of fighters from the Northern Alliance, the Taliban's only real opposition in the country.[11] Essentially, the Northern Alliance became the bulk of the US's ground forces in the country, with the United States supporting their efforts with its airpower. American airstrikes were devastating to the Taliban's ranks, possessing such deadly accuracy that some Northern Alliance commanders thought US soldiers had death rays, an idea that American soldiers made little effort to debunk. The combination of US airpower and the light counterattack toppled the Taliban from power within weeks. However, bin Laden managed to escape across the border into Pakistan. He left Afghanistan demoralized and injured, but he did not stay that way for long.

Al-Qa'ida's comeback began in some of Pakistan's remote regions; bin Laden's wife Amal has said that she and her husband were reunited "in 2003 in a remote part of Pakistan's Swat district."[12] And by 2005, bin Laden was ready to relocate his family to a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.[13] Al-Qa'ida's regrowth during this period was fundamentally helped by the US's 2003 invasion of Iraq, which displaced a secular dictator who had suppressed jihadist groups. The resulting chaos created conditions that were ideal for the growth of militancy—which in turn strengthened al-Qa'ida globally and would eventually give birth to ISIS.

As it recovered in Pakistan, al-Qa'ida underwent several adaptations. During the organization's time in Afghanistan, though it had significant connections to militant organizations and operations throughout the world, it did not recognize other groups as official branches. After the relocation to Pakistan, al-Qa'ida's senior leadership took on official branches in Iraq (al-Qa'ida in Iraq), Yemen (al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula), North Africa (al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb), and Somalia (al-Shabaab). The last of these was not officially recognized as a branch of al-Qa'ida until after bin Laden's death.

Al-Qa'ida occasionally mounted terrorist attacks against the West during this period. One of the most notable attacks occurred on July 7, 2005, when four British-born suicide bombers blew themselves up on London's public transit system during rush hour, killing fifty-two. A year after these attacks, al-Qa'ida released a commemorative video featuring a martyrdom tape recorded by ringleader Mohammad Sidique Khan. Al-Qa'ida's leadership simply could not have obtained this footage had the plot proceeded independent of them. Another plot, disrupted on August 10, 2006, was designed to use liquid explosives to blow up seven planes bound for the United States from Britain.

As we stood on the precipice of the Arab uprisings, which would shake MENA's regional order, al-Qa'ida's strategy came to focus on bleeding the American economy. Bin Laden had occasionally referred to this strategy previously—for example, in a dramatic October 2004 video address to the American people that came out just before the US presidential election. In it, he compared the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to his first encounter with a superpower adversary, saying that just as the Afghan mujahideen and Arab fighters had destroyed the Soviet Union economically, al-Qa'ida was now doing the same to the United States, undertaking a policy of "bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy."[14]

Exemplifying the latter stages of this economically focused strategy, the November 2010 issue of *Inspire*, the English-language online magazine produced by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), was dedicated to an apparently unsuccessful plot. The publication's cover featured a somewhat blurry photograph of a United Parcel Service plane on a runway, along with the headline "$4,200." This was a reference to a terrorist plot AQAP had launched the previous month involving bombs hidden in printer cartridges. The group's operatives successfully placed bombs aboard FedEx and UPS planes, each of which flew through several stops, but authorities managed to locate and disable the explosive devices before they were timed to explode.

The magazine made clear that AQAP's reason for celebrating an attack that killed nobody was the disparity between what the ink-cartridge plot cost the terrorists and what it was expected to cost their enemies: a $4,200 price tag for AQAP versus, according to the magazine, "billions of dollars in new security measures" for the United States and other Western countries. AQAP's head of external operations, Anwar al-Awlaki, explained that the jihadists' foes were faced with a dilemma once AQAP was able to successfully place the ink-cartridge bombs on cargo planes. "You either spend billions of dollars to inspect each and every package in the world," he wrote, "or you do nothing and we keep trying again."[15] Awlaki explained that this would be a difficult decision for Western countries because "the air freight is a multi-billion dollar industry," with FedEx alone flying "a fleet of 600 aircraft and ship[ping] an average of four million packages per day." An *Inspire* editorial further noted that large strikes, such as those of 9/11, were no longer required to defeat the United States, claiming that "in such an environment of security phobia that is sweeping America, it is more feasible to stage smaller attacks that involve less players and less time to launch and thus we may circumvent the security barriers America worked so hard to erect."[16] The plan was to launch smaller yet more frequent attacks to drive up the security costs of the jihadists' foes—a death by a thousand cuts.

This is where al-Qa'ida's strategy stood just before the Arab uprisings. But those revolutionary events would provide the jihadist group with opportunities that neither it nor the United States imagined.

AL-QA'IDA IN THE POST-ARAB UPRISINGS ENVIRONMENT

To understand al-Qa'ida's approach to the 2010–2011 Arab uprisings, it is important to understand the 2007–2009 defeat of al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), which the organization regarded as the biggest black mark on its reputation. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who led AQI until his death in June 2006, was extraordinarily brutal, even by jihadist standards. Images of beheadings and sectarian killings became associated with AQI, prompting Zawahiri to send Zarqawi a letter reprimanding him. Zawahiri warned Zarqawi not to "be deceived by the praise of some of the zealous young men and their description of you as the shaykh of the slaughterers." Zawahiri warned that these fanatics "do not express the general view of the admirer and the supporter of the resistance in Iraq."[17]

The totalitarian rule that AQI forcibly implemented also engendered a backlash. The *Sahwa* (Awakening) movement, announced by Sunni sheikhs in Iraq's Anbar province on September 9, 2006, was a manifestation of the growing anger at AQI. The *Sahwa* would prove instrumental in driving AQI from Anbar, and the model was later expanded to other Iraqi provinces through a program known as the Sons of Iraq. At its height, more than one hundred thousand predominantly Sunni Iraqis took part in the program.

AQI's defeat at the hands of fellow Sunnis was a black mark on al-Qa'ida's global reputation. Al-Qa'ida's senior leadership correctly recognized it as such, and the reputational damage that al-Qa'ida suffered as a result of AQI's failures no doubt contributed to American analysts' massive underestimation of how jihadist groups could exploit the postrevolution environment. Indeed, US analysts overwhelmingly believed that the changes to the region's political order were devastating for al-Qa'ida and other jihadist groups because they undermined the group's narrative and could remove the underlying grievances that drew people to jihadism.[18] Part of the problem that the US has experienced in combating the threat of jihadism is rooted in the fact that its analytic understanding of its foes has often been inaccurate.

Jihadist strategists correctly perceived two specific advantages that the Arab uprisings would offer to the movement. The first was prisoner releases. A lengthy hagiographical account of how "the mujahideen" had escaped from the Abu Za'bal prison appeared on the Ansar al-Mujahideen Network soon after the Egyptian uprising began. Thereafter, jihadist thinker Hani al-Siba'i published multiple lists of violent Islamists who had been released from Egyptian prisons.[19] The second perceived operational advantage was that the fall of established regimes would usher in an era of greater openness that would create unprecedented opportunities for jihadist *dawa* (proselytism).[20] Salafi jihadists' *dawa* efforts focused not on leading non-Muslims to Islam but on persuading other Muslims to accept their version of the faith.

Prisoner releases were, of course, not uniformly bad, as the Arab dictatorships were notorious for unjustly incarcerating and abusing political prisoners. But jihadists were part of this wave of releases. One example is Muhammad Jamal, an Egyptian whose network, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence found, was a part of the notorious September 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya.[21] Other prominent figures from Egypt's jihadist movement were also freed, including Muhammad al-Zawahiri, the brother of al-Qa'ida's emir and a former member of Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Other released Egyptian inmates returned to operational and media roles, including Murjan Salim.

The growth of the jihadist group Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia (AST) in the post-uprisings environment illustrates how both of these factors—prisoner releases and *dawa* opportunities—interacted to help jihadism grow. AST leader Abu Iyadh al-Tunisi had been imprisoned since 2003 for involvement in terrorism abroad but was released in the general amnesty of March 2011, as were other leading members of the group. Thereafter, the group was able to openly undertake *dawa* efforts, and it developed a sophisticated strategy in that regard. Some of AST's *dawa* efforts were traditional, such as holding *dawa* events at markets or universities, holding public protests, and dominating physical spaces, such as cafés near places of worship. But AST also used innovative approaches to *dawa*, including provision of social services and sophisticated use of social media. Almost immediately after it undertook humanitarian efforts, AST would post information about its latest venture, including photographs, to Facebook and Twitter. Social media served as a force multiplier: even if AST did not provide consistent services to an area, its social media activity portrayed a rapid pace of humanitarian assistance and thus helped the group achieve its goal of visibility.

But the most significant post-uprisings development with respect to jihadism is the Syrian civil war, which has already attracted more Sunni foreign fighters than the total number who traveled to South Asia during the decade-long Afghan-Soviet war. In addition to the tremendous opportunities it offered to jihadist groups, the Syrian civil war led to ISIS's emergence as an entity independent of al-Qa'ida. ISIS had been clashing with al-Qa'ida's leadership for various reasons, including ISIS emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's insistence that al-Qa'ida's Syrian branch, Jabhat al-Nusra, was subservient to him. After some attempts at mediation, on February 2, 2014, al-Qa'ida's senior leadership announced that it was no longer affiliated with ISIS. In addition to ISIS's insubordination, there were strategic differences between al-Qa'ida and ISIS that would soon be brought to the fore.

Following its expulsion from al-Qa'ida, ISIS actively lobbied for al-Qa'ida's affiliates to defect and join its cause (lobbying that had, in fact, begun even while ISIS remained part of al-Qa'ida's network). Following a major ISIS offensive into Iraq, capturing a number of cities at lightning speed and then promptly declaring that it had reestablished the caliphate, many analysts began to openly state that ISIS had eclipsed al-Qa'ida as the world's preeminent jihadist organization. Indeed, ISIS's visible successes soon made this view the conventional wisdom.[22] Some observers suggested that al-Qa'ida could face irrelevance or even be forced to disband.[23] Al-Qa'ida again ended up surpassing expectations, contrasting itself to ISIS's over-the-top brutality to change the way it was perceived regionally.

AL-QA'IDA CONFRONTS THE ISIS CHALLENGE

Al-Qa'ida turned ISIS's emergence into a strategic opportunity. Al-Qa'ida quietly, and yet relatively rapidly, gained ground in conflict zones across the Middle East and North Africa, including Syria and Yemen, where the group seized territory and embedded itself within local communities.

Al-Qa'ida's decision to become more covert and discreet in response to ISIS's ostentatious successes may seem counterintuitive at first. Indeed, it is the opposite of what most analysts expected. But it worked. To understand why al-Qa'ida made this decision, it is worth returning to AQI's 2007–2009 defeat and the black mark on al-Qa'ida's reputation. With AQI in a state of collapse by 2010, al-Qa'ida's senior leadership had set out to restore the organization's global image. Documents recovered from bin Laden's Abbottabad compound provide a glimpse into the measures that al-Qa'ida's leadership considered.

Al-Qa'ida's early reforms focused primarily on changing the group's strategic approach. In a May 2010 letter to senior al-Qa'ida official Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, bin Laden proposed a "new phase" in al-Qa'ida's campaign that would "correct [the mistakes] we made" and "reclaim . . . the trust of a large segment of those who lost their trust in the jihadis."[24] Central to this new phase was a population-centric strategy that mirrored the approach the US had used to defeat AQI. Bin Laden warned that if al-Qa'ida alienated the public, it could win "several battles while losing the war at the end."[25] In a separate letter to Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the emir of AQAP, Atiyah expounded on the need to win over the Muslim population, noting that "the people's support to the mujahedin is as important as the water for fish" (a nod to Mao's famous adage about the importance of the population for insurgents).[26] This embrace of population-centric measures meant that the organization had repudiated AQI's approach, which emphasized intimidating, rather than winning over, local communities.

Al-Qa'ida even considered changing its name to distance itself from AQI's legacy. One unnamed al-Qa'ida official argued that the name *al-Qa'ida* had become associated with a "military base with fighters" and did not make reference to the group's "broader mission to unify the Nation [*umma*]."[27] The author also noted that the group's name had become dissociated from Islam, and in that way "reduces the feeling of Muslims that we belong to them, and allows the enemies to claim deceptively that they are not at war with Islam and Muslims, but they are at war with the organization of al-Qa'ida." The official proposed several new names, including Muslim Unity Group (Jamaat Wahdat al-Muslimin) and Islamic Nation Unification Party (Hizb Tawhid al-Umma al-Islamiyya). Though al-Qa'ida never changed the broader organization's name, the group appears to have heeded the official's advice in some of its expansion efforts. As previously noted, several al-Qa'ida front groups adopted the name Ansar al-Sharia, while al-Qa'ida's Syrian affiliate initially eschewed the al-Qa'ida label in favor of the name Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahli al-Sham, also known as the al-Nusra Front.

In September 2013, Zawahiri, who had replaced bin Laden as al-Qa'ida's emir, released the "General Guidelines for Jihad," which institutionalized the reforms that the group had begun in the wake of AQI's defeat.[28] The document provides a revealing overview of al-Qa'ida's move to a more restrained and population-centric strategy. In it, Zawahiri instructs subordinates to avoid violence against religious minorities and "deviant sects" (referring to non-Sunnis) unless provoked and cautions against behavior that could trigger a "revolt of the masses." Zawahiri similarly advises al-Qa'ida's affiliates to refrain from killing women and children, to cease attacks in markets and mosques that could result in Muslim deaths, and to tolerate and collaborate with other Islamist groups, even those with whom al-Qa'ida has profound ideological differences. In the event jihadists violate these edicts or otherwise err, Zawahiri urges them to apologize and to compensate those who were harmed. The General Guidelines represented the culmination of more than five years of internal discussions and debates about how to wipe away the black mark left by AQI. But it was ISIS's expulsion and subsequent over-the-top brutality that really allowed al-Qa'ida to advance these efforts.

ISIS's strategy was diametrically opposed to al-Qa'ida's and was designed, at least in part, to turn al-Qa'ida's strengths into weaknesses. While al-Qa'ida often grew through clandestine means, ISIS stole the spotlight at every opportunity. ISIS built a robust propaganda apparatus suited for the digital age, pumping out a constant stream of videos, photos, and statements advertising its victories that were widely disseminated by its social media legions.[29] Al-Qa'ida sought to build relationships with other armed groups, including non-jihadist factions, while ISIS wanted to dominate all Sunni Muslim groups. Al-Qa'ida maintained the appearance of a population-centric approach, while ISIS openly advertised its brutality against residents of its caliphate.

With this brash approach, ISIS openly wooed al-Qa'ida's affiliates, attempting to absorb its parent's global network. Many analysts believed ISIS had the decided upper hand in this intra-jihadist competition and thus misunderstood al-Qa'ida's strategic course. Analysts widely assumed that the only way al-Qa'ida could remain influential was by replicating ISIS's conspicuous model—for example, by carrying out spectacular terrorist attacks. Typical of this view is a February 2015 *Foreign Affairs* article in which Clint Watts argues that al-Qa'ida is losing its competition to ISIS but still has a "clear path back to contention: a dramatic follow-up to the [Charlie] Hebdo attack."[30] But al-Qa'ida defied conventional wisdom and took the opposite approach from ISIS. Al-Qa'ida reduced its public profile, downplayed its successes rather than publicizing them, and embedded further within local populations. In this way, al-Qa'ida presented itself to the world as a more palatable alternative to its bloodthirsty rival.

Al-Qa'ida leaders' interactions with the media provide a lens for understanding the group's strategy for benefiting from ISIS's shocking rise. In a discussion with an *Al Jazeera* documentarian in early 2015, Abu Sulayman al-Muhajir, a high-ranking al-Nusra Front religious official from Australia, accused ISIS of "delegitimizing" other Sunni Muslim groups.[31] Muhajir contrasted ISIS with the al-Nusra Front, which he portrayed as trying to "restore the right of the Muslim people to choose their leaders" in Syria. Muhajir's statement highlighted how al-Qa'ida's localization strategy featured in its propaganda war with ISIS, as the al-Nusra Front was portrayed as an organic extension of the Syrian revolution and the Syrian people.

In June 2015, *The Guardian* published an extended interview with Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada, two of al-Qa'ida's most senior religious figures, that revealed another noteworthy aspect of al-Qa'ida's strategy. Rather than trying to convince the audience of al-Qa'ida's strength or relevance, the two ideologues concentrated on fueling the illusion that ISIS had already destroyed al-Qa'ida. Maqdisi claimed that al-Qa'ida's organizational structure had "collapsed," while Abu Qatada alleged that Zawahiri had become "isolated."[32] This portrayal was almost certainly disinformation. Al-Qa'ida had numerous strengths at the time, including affiliates that were gaining in Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and North Africa. If Maqdisi and Abu Qatada truly feared al-Qa'ida's collapse, they likely would have pointed to these strengths to rally the group's supporters. Instead, their emphasis on al-Qa'ida's weaknesses was seemingly directed at regimes feeling anxious about allowing the militant group to operate more openly.

These media themes were consistent with how al-Qa'ida affiliates functioned in practice. After a coalition of Islamist rebel factions, including the al-Nusra Front, seized the northwestern city of Idlib in April 2015, Nusra emir Abu Muhammad al-Julani said in an audio statement that his group did not "strive to rule the city or to monopolize it without others."[33] Julani's remarks were intended to reassure Idlib residents and other Islamist rebel factions that the al-Nusra Front, unlike ISIS, could cooperate with others and would not forcibly impose its will on the population.

AQAP adopted a similar approach to governance after it seized the Yemeni port city of Mukalla. The group appointed a local council, known as the Hadhrami Domestic Council, to govern Mukalla. Initially AQAP adopted a gradualist, somewhat lenient approach to the implementation of *shari'a*, though it eventually began cracking down more heavily on *shari'a* violations.[34] In a video released shortly after his death in June 2015, the AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi indirectly criticized ISIS for focusing on policing minor transgressions, claiming that this approach reflected a "narrow understanding" of *shari'a*.[35] Wuyahshi believed it was theologically acceptable and strategically wise for *shari'a* to be introduced slowly, allowing Yemenis to come to accept it, rather than alienating the population in the earliest stages.

But while al-Qa'ida made these global changes, its local approach to countering ISIS was the most effective aspect of its anti-ISIS strategy. Al-Qa'ida's affiliates proved willing and able to ruthlessly stamp out pro-ISIS sentiment within their ranks. One place where al-Qa'ida's anti-ISIS strategy has been deadly effective is the Sahel region of north-central Africa. In May 2015, Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui, a spokesman for al-Murabitun—a jihadist group established in 2013—pledged allegiance to ISIS. Sahraoui ostensibly did so on behalf of the entire al-Murabitun organization. Sahraoui's announcement was not well received by al-Murabitun leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar, an al-Qa'ida loyalist, who quickly released a statement reiterating al-Murabitun's allegiance to al-Qa'ida and lambasting Sahraoui for failing to consult with other members.[36] Belmokhtar then went on the offensive against al-Murabitun's pro-ISIS contingent, wounding Sahraoui and killing over a dozen of his men in June 2015. Several months later, al-Murabitun formally rejoined al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), cementing the group's position in the al-Qa'ida network.[37] Belmokhtar's crackdown on Sahraoui shattered ISIS's expansion prospects in the Sahel.

ISIS fared little better in Somalia, where al-Shabaab, another al-Qa'ida affiliate, mounted a merciless campaign aimed at rooting out ISIS supporters in its ranks. ISIS's early efforts to bribe Shabaab into defecting from al-Qa'ida were rebuffed.[38] When ISIS changed tack and tried to convince Shabaab foot soldiers and midlevel commanders to form a pro-ISIS splinter group, it ran up against stiff resistance.

Shabaab's intelligence wing, the *amniyat*, arrested dozens of pro-ISIS militants, and perhaps far more than that, while other ISIS sympathizers turned themselves in to government security forces to avoid the *amniyat*'s wrath. As one Shabaab commander put it, many ISIS supporters preferred to "fall into the enemy's hands instead of meeting death in the hands of" the *amniyat*.[39] As a result of the *amniyat*'s crackdown, ISIS has managed to establish only a small and tenuous foothold in Somalia.

The Sahel and Somalia are not the only locales where ISIS has struggled to gain a foothold. In Afghanistan, ISIS has run up against a much stronger opponent in the Taliban, which has contained ISIS's growth and crushed several nascent pro-ISIS factions.[40] In November 2015, the Taliban largely wiped out the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which had pledged allegiance to ISIS several months earlier. The IMU's defeat prompted one of the group's supporters to remark that "what America and its agents could not do in 14 years, the Taliban did in 24 hours."[41] ISIS's struggles in Afghanistan amount to a victory for al-Qa'ida's coalition-building approach. While ISIS has decided to try to take on and crush all competing centers of power, al-Qa'ida has built relationships with local power brokers like the Taliban.

Essentially, ISIS has struggled to establish a presence in most countries where al-Qa'ida has a foothold. Even when ISIS was at its peak, the vast majority of al-Qa'ida affiliates refused to defect and instead hunted down and neutralized ISIS sympathizers. Not only did al-Qa'ida not lose significant ground to ISIS, but it has also been able to take advantage of the ISIS challenge to operate far more openly than it did before.

By skillfully contrasting itself with ISIS while also positioning itself as an ally to the Sunni states in the competition between Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council (a coalition between Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman), al-Qa'ida has put itself in perhaps the strongest position it has ever known. The organization is the dominant military force in significant swaths of territory in Syria and wields considerable influence across southern Yemen. Al-Qa'ida's newest affiliate, al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), which was formally established in September 2014, has quietly established a foothold in parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan and poses a growing threat to India and Bangladesh. Shabaab and AQIM are resurgent, with the former group intensifying its attacks on African Union forces and the Somali state after a period of relative decline.

ISIS has not been as fortunate, though its proficiency at launching terrorist attacks may be able to sustain it as the remaining territory that ISIS holds slips slowly from its grasp.

THE FUTURE OF ISIS

The fact that ISIS would not be able to maintain the territory it once controlled—territory that at one point was around the size of Great Britain—was eminently foreseeable. ISIS pursued a strategy that made enemies at every turn. After its dramatic offensive in June 2014 that allowed it to capture Mosul, Tikrit, and other major Iraqi cities, ISIS betrayed groups that had aided its advance, including Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqat al-Naqshabandia (JRTN), Ansar al-Islam, Jaysh al-Mujahedin, and the

General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries. ISIS attacked factions with whom they were not at war, such as the Kurds in northern Iraq. ISIS also committed atrocities against religious minorities—specifically, its genocidal campaign against Iraq's Yazidis—that were alarming enough to help drag in an international coalition to contain and defeat ISIS. The US did not want to get pulled back into Iraq militarily, but ISIS managed to make itself alarming enough to goad the US into a military intervention.

By the beginning of 2017, Iraqi forces were deep in the heart of ISIS's Iraqi capital of Mosul, fighting to retake the city. Meanwhile, the coalition's noose was tightening around its Syrian capital of Raqqa, though it wasn't clear when the operation to retake Raqqa would begin, nor which forces would be at the front lines.

As ISIS's ability to control territory declines, it will likely try to sustain itself by emphasizing its extraordinary proficiency at carrying out terrorist attacks throughout the globe. During the lunar month of Ramadan in 2016, ISIS carried out an unprecedented global terrorist campaign. Just before that month began, ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani released an audio message exhorting ISIS's supporters to make Ramadan "a month of calamity everywhere for the non-believers," and urged everyone considering migrating to the caliphate to instead carry out attacks in their home countries.[42] Adnani's statement proved to be an ugly portent of things to come, as militants acting in ISIS's name struck in more than ten countries during the group's Ramadan offensive. Highly visible attacks in Istanbul, Dhaka, Orlando, and Baghdad left hundreds of civilians dead as operatives targeted airports, restaurants, nightclubs, and shopping centers.

Though some observers have expressed skepticism about the extent of the organization's involvement in these attacks, a growing body of evidence suggests that the Ramadan offensive was in fact largely a coordinated and deliberate ISIS campaign. Some attacks, like the Istanbul and Baghdad bombings, were centrally directed by ISIS attack networks, with the organization deploying trained operatives. Other operations were the product of collaboration between local networks and ISIS operatives based in Syria and Iraq who helped to organize and coordinate the attacks remotely.

The Ramadan offensive bore the hallmark of the Amn al-Kharji, the Islamic State's secretive external operations wing, which is responsible for planning espionage activities and terrorist operations outside the caliphate's core territory.[43] The Amn al-Kharji built a robust infrastructure that enables it to coordinate and direct attacks across the globe. Relatively little was known about the Amn al-Kharji's structure in various theaters until the March 2016 attacks in Brussels, but subsequent investigations helped to reveal more about ISIS's European network.

The Ramadan campaign pulled back the curtain on ISIS's external operations networks in other parts of the world. The June 28, 2016, assault on Istanbul's airport, like the Paris and Brussels attacks, appears to have been organized and coordinated by an experienced Syria-based external operations planner.[44] According to Turkish police, the attack's mastermind was Ahmet Chatayev, a Chechen-born militant and former member of the Caucasus Emirate who now resides in ISIS-controlled territory.[45] The three attackers who perpetrated the Istanbul attack are believed to have traveled from Raqqa to Turkey about a month before that attack, reportedly bringing suicide vests and bombs with them.[46] This evidence leaves little doubt that the Islamic State centrally planned the Istanbul airport attack.

Statements from security officials indicate that other attacks in ISIS's "near abroad" (the region surrounding ISIS-controlled territory) during Ramadan were similarly directed by operatives inside the caliphate. A spokesman for the Saudi interior ministry asserted that three suicide attacks that struck Saudi Arabia on July 4, 2016, were planned in Syria, and he suggested that the suicide vests for the attacks may have also been built abroad.[47] Similarly, Lebanon's interior minister concluded that eight suicide bombers who attacked the northern Lebanese town of al-Qaa on June 27 came from Syria.[48]

The attacks in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey paint a clear picture of ISIS's external operations capabilities nearby and abroad. ISIS has developed robust networks in countries across the Middle East by both tapping into local recruitment pools and deploying operatives from inside the caliphate to set up shop in neighboring states. The leadership of the Amn al-Kharji has maintained direct contact with its cells abroad, and the Ramadan campaign highlighted ISIS's ability to mobilize these networks as a part of a coordinated campaign.

But some of the attacks attributed to ISIS during its Ramadan campaign did not have the same kind of central direction. In regions far from ISIS's territorial stronghold, the group's ability to play a hands-on role in operational planning may be somewhat limited. Thus, ISIS has engaged in what can be described as "virtual planning": having Syria-based foreign fighters coordinate attacks via online communications with local networks. Looking broadly at the virtual planning model, beyond even its use in the Ramadan 2016 campaign, it is clear how this approach has greatly expanded the group's operational reach.

In the virtual planner model, most of the attackers have never personally met the ISIS operatives they are conspiring with. Rather, ISIS has taken advantage of recent advances in online communications and encryption to engineer a process by which the group's top operatives can directly guide lone attackers, playing an intimate role in the conceptualization, target selection, timing, and execution of attacks. Virtual planners can offer operatives the same services once provided by physical networks. This model has helped transform lone attackers who rely heavily on the Internet from the bungling wannabes of a decade ago into something more dangerous. The virtual planner model allows ISIS to maximize the impact and propaganda value of attacks waged in its name, making sure they are seamlessly incorporated into the group's overarching strategy. At the same time, this model avoids many of the risks associated with physically training operatives.

Prior to ISIS's emergence, al-Qa'ida often used its propaganda and public statements to try to inspire lone individuals to carry out attacks. Anwar al-Awlaki was one particularly successful example of this approach. But ISIS's virtual planner model is an outgrowth of, and improvement upon, what Awlaki did. For one, ISIS's virtual planners have the potential to cast a wider recruitment net than Awlaki did. Awlaki was, of course, a product of the age of mass communication and global interconnectivity, but even his superb oratorical skills could not match the feelings of "remote intimacy" with people halfway across the world that can be fostered through social media, or the volume and two-way nature of communications that medium allows.[49] Indian intelligence officials believe that ISIS's South Asia virtual planner, Yusuf al-Hindi, has been in touch with more than eight hundred Indians through Facebook and WhatsApp.[50] It seems that none of ISIS's propagandists or virtual planners possess the same kind of raw magnetism that Awlaki has for English speakers, but they have the advantage of exploiting a medium that is simply more engrossing due to the constant contact it allows.

This continuous contact may allow a higher recruitment rate than the essentially one-way communication of video postings. By building an intimate relationship with the potential attacker, the virtual planner provides encouragement and validation, addressing the individual's doubts and hesitations. Virtual planners can replicate the same social pressures that exist in in-person cells. As Peter Weinberger of the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism put it, "People will get in these chat rooms and they will feel like they have a relationship with someone. That's where the peer-to-peer contact is drawing them in."[51] This does not diminish the importance of in-person recruiting networks, where social pressures are likely more acute than in the online environment. But there isn't always an in-person network in place that can interact with potential operatives. People can simply wander into searchable online networks, rather than having to be identified and carefully socialized by in-person networks that must act covertly. And unlike physical networks, the virtual planner model does not risk the capture or death of the network's key operatives.

Individuals inspired by ISIS reach out directly to virtual planners for guidance and assistance in carrying out attacks. For example, virtual planner Junaid Hussain, a former British hacker turned terrorist, sent operative Junead Khan a bomb-making manual to assist him in a 2015 plot.[52] Beyond recruitment and operational guidance, virtual planners can also bring disparate individuals and cells together to form larger attack networks. This is something that ISIS virtual planner Rachid Kassim did successfully, including in a September 2016 plot that brought together three female terrorists who did not know each other before he formed a relationship with all three.[53]

ISIS's virtual planners allow the group to effectively seize ownership over what would previously have been considered lone wolf attacks. By creating a bridge between potential militants and the organization, virtual planners empower lone actors to fulfill ISIS's objectives while requiring minimal resources from the organization. Virtual planners transform these individuals into ambassadors for ISIS's brand and soldiers who can advance its strategic aims. Each attack showcases ISIS's global reach. In this way, virtual planners help maximize the psychological and reputational effects of violence committed in ISIS's name.

ISIS's future terrorism efforts will employ both the Amn al-Kharji and the virtual planner model to maintain the organization's prominence even as its territorial control declines.

CONCLUSION

Al-Qa'ida's successes can be attributed to a number of factors. Geopolitical developments, including the escalation of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and certain Sunni states' increasing willingness to work with unsavory actors to counter Iranian efforts, have benefited al-Qa'ida in Syria and Yemen. Al-Qa'ida also continues to exploit the instability produced by the Arab uprisings. But al-Qa'ida's handling of ISIS's emergence has also been a factor in the former's gains. While ISIS horrifies the world and alienates Sunni Muslims with its brutality, al-Qa'ida appeals to local populations and other armed factions by casting itself as a less extreme alternative to ISIS.

It's clear that al-Qa'ida is better positioned than ISIS to succeed in the future. ISIS's growth model, which emphasizes immediate, constant, and highly public successes, is undoubtedly effective when the group is winning. Indeed, when ISIS swept through northern Iraq in the summer of 2014, the group seemed nearly unstoppable, with its sleek propaganda apparatus amplifying its every victory. But it is not clear that ISIS ever prepared itself for a rainy day—and now a rainy season has arrived for its caliphate.

Al-Qa'ida, on the other hand, has a track record of thriving in the face of adversity. In the case of both AQI's failed experiment and the Arab uprisings, al-Qa'ida's capacity for strategic patience and ability to adapt its approach enabled it to overcome challenges and capitalize on unanticipated opportunities. Al-Qa'ida continues to play the long game today. While the international community remains largely focused on ISIS, al-Qa'ida is flying below the radar, building its support base in countries like Syria and Yemen, establishing safe havens, destabilizing enemy states, and preparing for a post-ISIS future. Al-Qa'ida, like ISIS, boasts reestablishment of the caliphate as its goal, but it believes that ISIS was too hasty in announcing the return of the caliphate when the foes of jihadists could still, with relative ease, bring ISIS's "state" to ruin.

Unlike ISIS, which is happy to alienate even prospective allies, al-Qa'ida has maintained a relationship with donors and other external supporters. After the 9/11 attacks, the United States put considerable effort into shutting down the charity networks that supported al-Qa'ida throughout the globe. But times have changed. With several states now openly aiding al-Qa'ida in Syria and elsewhere, opportunities for nongovernmental and quasi-governmental organizations that support al-Qa'ida to expand their assistance to the jihadist group have magnified. The longer the international community underestimates al-Qa'ida's planning and potency, the more entrenched the group will become and the more difficult it will be to uproot.

This is not to say that ISIS is going away anytime soon. It is likely to endure as a challenge—and in turn, the difficulties that the US has had in countering its VNSA opponents raises the question of whether it possesses the right toolkit to deal with the challenges they represent.

One analogy that can contextualize the competition between VNSAs and the state is that of start-up companies against legacy industries in the economic sphere. In the economic sphere, behemoth companies like Borders or Blockbuster have been completely displaced by younger competitors that are more agile, able to rapidly shift their strategy, and capable of seamlessly incorporating the newest technologies into their business model. VNSAs are the start-ups of the political organizing sphere: they have been able to quickly evolve, adapt, and cleverly exploit emerging technologies. Governments, in turn, look a lot like legacy industries.

How can state actors adapt? The approach adopted by Intuit, a company that sells financial management products, may provide a good model. At first glance, Intuit appears to be a large bureaucratic corporation: founded three decades ago, it has more than 7,500 employees and generates several billion dollars a year in revenue. But the company's founder, Scott Cook, sought to transform Intuit's culture after tabulating data on new products and concluding "that the company was getting a measly return on its massive investments."[54] Cook looked to unconventional sources of wisdom, including bringing Eric Ries, author of the best-selling book *Startup Lessons Learned*, to his headquarters to see how well Intuit's organizational principles stacked up against those of start-up competitors. Cook transformed Intuit into a "30-year-old startup."[55] Employees would pitch Cook new ideas during lunchtime, with Cook and his colleagues brainstorming about envisioned products.[56] Intuit instituted "innovation time," allowing employees to spend 10 percent of their work hours developing new products and projects, an approach first popularized by Google.[57]

State actors that face VNSA challengers will have to consider whether to remake themselves in the image of "lean start-ups." This means chipping away at—or sometimes radically slicing through—entrenched bureaucracy and building smaller, more agile agencies. Here are some principles gleaned from start-ups that would help state actors approach the VNSA challenge more successfully:

- *De-bureaucratize*. Bureaucracy kills. Threats move quickly, and in general every level of bureaucracy slows down response time. De-bureaucratized cells within government can serve as fast-moving start-ups within the broader bureaucracy, providing innovative responses in pursuit of the executive's strategic directives.
- *Allow the state to acquire the skills it wants, when it wants*. The US federal government's hiring and contracting policies are so byzantine that they virtually ensure that government will frequently fail to hire the best and brightest, that the government will often get suboptimal services, and that all of this will cost more money. All of this points to a defective architecture.
- *Let market forces work to the state's advantage*. There is no reason that the incentive structure for analysts should not favor better, more accurate predictions. Any time the state fails to properly incentivize analysts, it voluntarily makes itself maladaptive in the face of the twenty-first century's immense challenges.

The road that state actors must take to incorporate more start-up principles is likely to be replete with obstacles. But if state actors do not evolve, they will see their legitimacy and power erode further. The cost will also likely be reflected in bodies on the streets, as we have recently seen in vicious attacks in Paris, Brussels, Istanbul, and so many other cities.

VNSAs, including the jihadist VNSAs discussed in this chapter, are now a fixture in global politics. They have entrenched themselves in local communities, building bonds and social networks that will take years to dismantle. And VNSAs are likely to become more emboldened by new technologies. State actors will have no choice but to adapt to this new reality. Better understanding VNSAs is part of the solution, but so too is asking whether governments have an organizational design that is suitable for this challenge.

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their goals, the less likely they are to turn to violence." Brian Fishman of the New America Foundation says, "Knocking off [Hosni] Mubarak has been Zawahiri's goal for more than 20 years, and he was unable to achieve it. Now a nonviolent, nonreligious, pro-democracy movement got rid of him in a matter of weeks. It's a major problem for al-Qaeda." Steven Simon of the Council on Foreign Relations describes the uprisings as a strategic defeat for jihadism, explaining that "these uprisings have shown that the new generation is not terribly interested in al-Qaeda's ideology."

Former CIA deputy director Michael Morell has explained that the intelligence community's early assessment of the revolutions tracked with these public-sphere pronouncements. In his memoir *The Great War of Our Time*, Morell regretfully recalls that his agency "thought and told policy-makers that this outburst of popular revolt would damage al Qa'ida by undermining the group's narrative. Our analysts figured that the protests would send a signal throughout the region that political change was possible without al Qa'ida's leading the way and without the violence that al Qa'ida said was necessary." Michael Morell, *The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight Against Terrorism from al Qa'ida to ISIS* (New York: Twelve, 2015).

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CHAPTER 20

THE PUSH AND PULL OF STRATEGIC COOPERATION

The US Relationship with Turkey in the Middle East

Henri J. Barkey

Not long before the 1974 Cyprus crisis, the US administration decided to move Turkey, along with Greece and Cyprus, from the Near East to Europe. This, of course, was just an organizational change within the State Department, but it would underlie much of Washington's approach to Turkey in the ensuing decades. The importance of Turkey, a major US ally during the Cold War, was measured largely by its contribution to NATO's struggle against the Soviet Union. Its strategic location close to both the Soviet Union and the Middle East (one of the premier theaters for superpower rivalry) and control of the straits that connect the Black Sea to the Aegean and Mediterranean made Turkey vital to the United States. With the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Washington continued to insist that Turkey was a European country and worked hard to firmly ensconce Ankara in Western institutions by championing its candidacy for European Union (EU) membership.

The new geopolitics of the post-Soviet space opened new arenas of economic and political opportunities for Turkey. It could demonstrate that it had a role to play in Central Asia and the Caucasus, hitherto ruled by Moscow, and, with the collapse of Yugoslavia and the subsequent conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, in the Balkans as well.

The Cold War had imposed narrow and yet simple constraints on the relations between the US and its allies. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkish-American relations evolved, became more complex and at times contentious. The traditional issues, such as Greece and Cyprus, were joined by Iraq, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, the post-9/11 war on terrorism, oil pipelines from the Caucasus and Central Asia, Turkish-Israeli rapprochement, and the future evolution of a European security infrastructure. Through the Obama administration, the US commitment to Turkey's EU candidacy remained solid even as Turkey's prospects rose and ebbed (which they had done considerably by 2017). Despite the confluence of issues, Ankara's view is somewhat jaundiced by the fact that it has not achieved a sense of parity in its relations with the United States. Criticism of its human rights practices in the 1990s by Washington was a constant irritant for Turkish authorities, who also harbored deep suspicions of US intentions in northern Iraq. Still, Turkey's devastating economic crisis in 2001 was a reminder of its deep dependence on Washington.

With the end of the Cold War, Ankara's focus gradually shifted to the hitherto disregarded Middle East. Ironically, it is in the Middle East that the United States has found Ankara to be most relevant to its own policies and ambitions. During the 1990s, Saddam Hussein emerged as the single most important factor in US-Turkish relations as the Turks were critical to the US policy of containing Iraq. The 2003 Iraq war dealt Turkish-American relations a serious blow, primarily because Turkey refused to allow a second northern front against Baghdad and the concomitant transit of US troops through its territory. Ankara feared that the war would bring Iraqi Kurds much closer to independence, with serious implications for its own Kurdish population.

The 2002 advent of the AKP, a "moderate" Islam-oriented Justice and Development Party, brought new risks and opportunities to the relationship. On the one hand, the party's roots were in the anti-Western and anti-American Islamist movement of yesteryear and created the risk of a domestic political confrontation between it and the secular civilian and military establishment. On the other hand, the advent through the ballot box of a moderate Islamist party, committed to European integration, validated the US discourse on democracy.

By 2010, the US-Turkish relationship had soured; ironically, the change came about during the Obama presidency, an administration that was perceived as far friendlier to Turkey, and despite the proliferation of arenas of cooperation such as the G20 and the UN Security Council. A new, self-confident Turkish foreign policy—which emphasized its centrality in global affairs, pushed for preeminence in adjoining regions, and disagreed sharply with Washington on critical issues—had emerged. While Ankara and Washington began to see eye to eye on Iraq, Iran, Armenia, and Israel, the acrimonious tone led some in Washington to question Turkey's direction.

The relationship was quickly repaired with the advent of the Arab uprisings, which saw Obama and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan confer often and strategize together. However, that too would be a passing fling. The Syrian crisis helped sow acrimony again as the two partners disagreed over whom to support among the myriad of groups in Syria.

This chapter focuses on the post–Cold War Turkish-American relationship within the context of the Middle East, and for simplicity's sake I define the region to include the Caucasus and Central Asia as well. Despite a contextual focus on the Middle East, I consider other important US-Turkish issues as well.

ORIGINS OF THE TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP

The Turkish-American relationship in the post–World War II era dates to Soviet leader Josef Stalin's threats to both Greece and Turkey and the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine in March 1947. The Truman Doctrine marked the beginning of the Cold War and containment policy and redefined Turkey's position in the world from a reluctant late participant in the war effort against the Axis powers to a frontline state in the fight against Communism. Turkey, together with Greece, joined the NATO alliance in 1952. The change in external alliances was accompanied by an equally dramatic turn of events within Turkey: the one-party state established by Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, gave way—albeit slowly and reluctantly—to a multiparty political system, and the new leaders of Turkey remained closely attached to the United States.

The Democrat Party, which took over the reins of power in Turkey in 1950, was ostensibly more pro–United States and, more important perhaps, more market oriented. Once in power, the Democrat administration of Adnan Menderes took the lead in the creation of the 1955 Baghdad Pact, a bloc of countries that joined together to thwart Soviet advances into the Arab Middle East.[1] The Baghdad Pact, comprising Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan, was short-lived because Iraq pulled out following the 1958 overthrow of the regime in Baghdad. The pact reinvented itself as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), although it proved to be of limited use.

The US-Turkish relations suffered from ups and downs because of the rivalry with Greece, another NATO ally. The island of Cyprus, home to Greeks and Turks, gained its independence from Great Britain in 1960. The intercommunal conflicts between majority Greeks and minority Turks on Cyprus often brought Turkey to the brink of invading the island in defense of the Turks. In 1964 a last-minute letter from President Lyndon Johnson threatening Ankara with serious repercussions should it invade the island is credited with stopping the Turkish government from pursuing this course. In 1974, however, following a coup in Cyprus inspired by the ruling military junta in Athens, Turkish troops intervened. Even though the initial July 1974 Turkish invasion—conducted under the auspices of the London agreement that had formally recognized Turkey, Greece, and Britain as guarantor powers for the island's communities—received mixed international reviews, the Turks followed it up by a second one in August. The latter resulted in the current status quo. The reaction to the second military action was quite drastic. The US Congress, in opposition to the administration's wishes, imposed an arms embargo on Turkey, which would last from 1975 to 1978, further embittering Turkish attitudes toward the United States. In reaction to the embargo, the Turkish prime minister, Suleyman Demirel, closed all US bases in Turkey except for those that had a specific NATO mission and announced the intention of his government to pursue a policy of rapprochement with Arab and Eastern Bloc countries.

Tensions with the United States coincided with a period of domestic turbulence in Turkey. Starting in the late 1960s, anti-Americanism, largely a mirror image of student movements in Europe and elsewhere around the globe, permeated all levels of society.[2] In the 1970s, economic difficulties, coupled with the rise of militant left- and right-wing groups, seriously undermined Turkey's stability. The political system seemed to come under siege from every corner of the country and every political tendency; in addition to the left- and right-wing groups, Islamist and Kurdish organizations had also began to agitate. In turn, Turkey's instability began to worry Washington and its European allies.

Frayed Turkish-American relations began to mend with the lifting of the arms embargo in 1978 and, more importantly, with the rapid transformation of Turkey's immediate neighborhood. The Iranian revolution created a new revisionist anti-American power in a sensitive region and cost the United States an intelligence perch for eavesdropping on the Soviet Union. That same year, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, and although Turkey would not figure prominently in the proxy war that Washington would initiate, the Cold War was back on, emphasizing once again Turkey's strategic location. Washington, attuned to Turkey's geostrategic importance, was muted in its criticism when Turkish generals took power in September 1980 amid rising political violence and parliamentary deadlock.

The 1980s would usher in a new era in Turkish politics. The centerpiece of this decade was the economic reforms initiated by Turgut Özal. He first unleashed them in January 1980 for Demirel's government; he continued them as minister in charge of the economy during the military interregnum; and he accelerated them following his 1983 victory in the first elections since the coup. In effect, he single-handedly managed to transform Turkey's economy from an inward-looking one to an export-oriented one. Özal's success in the economic sphere brought a degree of self-confidence to Turkey as the Turkish private sector started to export furiously, especially to Europe. In the years that followed, the economic reforms would be crucial in enhancing Turkey's attractiveness to the EU. Although Özal's approach found favor in Washington, nagging issues remained. Among them was the role of ethnic lobbies in Washington, primarily Greek and Armenian, in undermining the Turkish cause. The Greek lobby was seen as responsible for imposing the arms embargo in 1975, and Armenian groups succeeded in making the 1915 Ottoman genocide of Armenians a salient political issue. Attempts in Congress to pass resolutions recognizing the genocide brought about strong Turkish reactions, often overshadowing other diplomatic business. Ankara's troubles in Congress spurred it to seek its own allies in the United States.

US-TURKISH RELATIONS UNDER IRAQ'S SHADOW: PHASE 1

Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait represented the first challenge of the post–Cold War era. From then on, directly or indirectly, Iraq would cast its long shadow over US-Turkish relations. The Iraq issue is best analyzed in two phases: the first phase covers the period from the Gulf War to September 11, 2001; the second phase revolves around the 2003 US invasion of Iraq and the ensuing insurgency. Turkey's proximity to Iraq and the basing of US aircraft at the Incirlik air base to maintain a no-fly zone over northern Iraq after the conclusion of the Gulf War would make Turkey a linchpin in Washington's containment strategy of Baghdad. As long as Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq, US policy, as it evolved through the 1990s, could not be implemented without Ankara's help. The Gulf crisis also exacerbated the insurrection by Turkish Kurds in the country's southeastern regions. The often-brutal methods employed by the Turkish state to combat this rebellion increasingly put it at odds with its US ally.

At the onset of the Kuwait crisis, President Özal—despite his limited powers as president and facing a great deal of opposition at home—managed to orient Turkish policy behind the United States and its allies in what he was sure would be the winning side. At his instigation, his government closed down Iraq's main export pipelines to the Mediterranean in anticipation of UN sanctions resolutions. Özal struck a cordial relationship with President George H. W. Bush during the crisis and proved quite willing to push his country even farther along the path of cooperation with the allies.[3] The opposition to his policies became so fierce that for the first time in Turkish history a chief of staff of the armed forces resigned in protest rather than cooperate with his president.[4]

When the defeated Iraqi regime turned on its own unruly population in 1991, the Kurds in the north, who had taken advantage of the Gulf War to rebel, began to flee in large numbers to the Iranian and Turkish borders, resulting in a massive refugee crisis. For Turkey, which was confronting a Kurdish insurgency of its own, the inflow of more Kurds into its territory was an unacceptable burden. As a result, the United States, with its allies, put together a force composed of aircraft and ground troops called Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) to force Iraqi troops out of northern Iraq and allow Kurdish refugees to return home. OPC, based in Turkey, required periodic approval by the Turkish parliament, and because of the acrimonious debates it generated, it became a source of tension between Washington and Ankara. These bitter debates were often marked by the quiet, last-minute intervention of the powerful Turkish military in favor of renewing the OPC's mandate. The process, however, did not serve either country well.

Turkish insecurities regarding OPC were directly related to the domestic Kurdish insurgency led by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, which peaked around 1992. The government felt seriously threatened by the PKK taking advantage of Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq and the sympathetic populace in southeastern Turkey. As casualties mounted in the southeast, Turks feared the influence of the Iraqi Kurdish example. Iraqi Kurds, thanks to OPC, were no longer living as subjects of the Iraqi regime and had established their own government structures and had even organized their own elections. Ankara, moreover, was alarmed at the prospect of eventual Iraqi Kurdish independence and its demonstration effect on its own Kurds. Turkish policy in the 1990s became focused on discouraging Iraqi Kurds from breaking away and on encouraging Saddam's regime to peacefully reintegrate the north. As such, Turkish and American policy diverged significantly over Iraq. A principal proponent of this strategy in Turkey was none other than former prime minister Bülent Ecevit, who in opposition became the most vociferous critic (together with the Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan) of US policy and OPC in particular. Ecevit accused the United States of planning to create a putative Kurdish state in northern Iraq.[5]

Over time, OPC was restructured, its land component removed, and its renewals routinized. It was renamed Operation Northern Watch (ONW). ONW and its southern counterpart represented a first line of defense for the United States against Saddam and increased the psychological pressure on Baghdad by reminding it daily that it did not control its own territory. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that without ONW, Washington's Iraq policy could have collapsed. As the popularity of UN-imposed economic sanctions on Iraq waned in the late 1990s, ONW's importance grew.

However, this was not a one-way street, as ONW provided numerous benefits to Turkey. It was an important source of Turkish leverage in Washington, which always had to take account of Turkish sensitivities in Iraq and elsewhere for fear of jeopardizing ONW. ONW provided a cover for Turkish military incursions into northern Iraq in pursuit of PKK insurgents. More importantly, it crystallized US support for Turkey's position on the PKK as a terrorist organization and ensured Washington's collaboration in Öcalan's apprehension in February 1999 after his eviction from Syria.[6] Öcalan's capture was an important victory for Ankara as the PKK, in order to prevent the Turkish authorities from executing its leader, decided to halt its military operations and remove its fighters from Turkish soil to northern Iraq.

Despite the increasing collaboration between Washington and Ankara, Iraq remained a source of tension in Turkish-American relations throughout the Clinton administration. Turks were suspicious of US intentions in the region. They were convinced that their own Kurdish problem and the PKK insurgency could be attributed to the absence of "legitimate authority" in northern Iraq (which was controlled by two Kurdish factions at loggerheads with each other), the collapse of their trade relations with Baghdad following the Gulf War, and the imposition of economic sanctions on Iraq. They made it clear that their preference was the reunification of Iraqi territory under the control of the central government in Baghdad. This Turkish position ran counter to US preferences, but the internecine divisions within the Kurdish community between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)—led by Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani, respectively—would continue to undermine Washington's position.

The unresolved status of Iraq, particularly northern Iraq, and the prospect of Kurdish autonomy compelled Turkey to become an active player in northern Iraqi politics. In its determination to eradicate the PKK and prevent the deepening of Kurdish autonomy in the north, Ankara alternated its support among the different Kurdish factions. It sporadically engaged in large military incursions into the north, based troops there, and with time created the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF), composed of members of the Turkish-speaking minority in Iraq, as a counterweight to the Kurds and their aspirations. Trade between Iraq and Turkey flourished, especially after the oil-for-food UN resolution, which stipulated that Iraqi oil exports could be used to import food and medicine. Although this trade did not match prewar levels, it nonetheless provided Turkey with access to oil, including smuggled oil, and some leverage over the Iraqi Kurds (particularly the KDP). In order to support Ankara, which had complained bitterly about the losses it had incurred as a result of the

Kuwait war, the United States insisted that a majority of the oil to be exported out of Iraq be transported through Turkish pipelines.

THE CONTEXT BEYOND IRAQ

Although Iraq was a dominating concern in the 1990s, other issues influenced and enriched the complex US-Turkish relations. Throughout the 1990s, the United States, concerned about Turkish domestic political stability, tried to fortify Ankara by endorsing its quest for European Union membership and by supporting it economically and pushing it to reform its archaic approach to human rights and ethnic relations. The latter effort often produced sharp differences between the two countries, yet Turkish-American relations were on the mend by the end of the decade. Ankara, not surprisingly, took a dim view of US interference in its domestic politics when the Clinton administration criticized Turkey's undemocratic practices and its repression of Kurdish rights and Islamic parties. Still, the US administration simultaneously pursued a number of initiatives designed to improve Turkey's regional standing, improve its EU membership chances, and strengthen its integration with the world economy.[7] These included the push for the construction of an oil pipeline from Baku to the Mediterranean port city of Ceyhan, which would make Turkey a major transit route for Caspian oil; the inclusion of Turkey on the list of the ten big emerging markets, requiring special US attention; and the push for the successful conclusion of negotiations for a customs union with the EU. Later on, when the EU snubbed Ankara at the 1997 Luxembourg summit, Washington undertook a relentless campaign to convince the Europeans that Turkey deserved consideration for membership.

Perhaps the most emblematic moment of this relationship occurred during President Clinton's visit to Turkey in autumn 1999. Spending a record five days in this country (including attendance at the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] summit), the president visited with the 1999 earthquake victims and gave a well-received speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

One of the more fundamental changes in Turkish foreign policy after the demise of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War had been its burgeoning relationship with Israel. The dramatic proof of this transformation came about during the tenure of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, perhaps the single most anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic Turkish politician, who, under pressure from his armed forces, had to sign a military cooperation agreement with Israel. The nature of Turkish-Israeli relations was controversial. For some, it was a strategic relationship designed to radically change the balance of power in the Middle East, whereas others saw it as a development that came about—albeit in an accelerated fashion—following years of deliberate neglect.[8] There were a number of reasons why Turkey decided to embark on cooperation with Israel. The Oslo agreements between Israel and the PLO in 1993 enabled Ankara to relax its approach to Israel. For the Turkish military fighting the PKK insurgency, an opening to Israel served to punish Syria, which had been harboring the PKK chief Öcalan. The close cooperation of Syria's northern and southern neighbors, the two most formidable regional military powers, was received with great alarm in the Arab world.

But among the most important reasons for the rapprochement was the perception in Turkey that improving relations with Israel would help Turkey in Washington. Absent an effective lobby of its own, Ankara had already begun to use its own Jewish citizens to lobby the United States. Still, this was not enough to counter what Ankara had come to believe was the influence of "evil lobbies" or "foreign elements," meaning the Greek and Armenian lobbies, with the US Congress.[9] In addition to these, human rights nongovernmental organizations had stepped up their criticisms of Turkey on Capitol Hill, especially with the intensification of the conflict in southeastern Turkey. Close cooperation with Israel would help Turkey's image in the generally Israel-friendly US Congress and mobilize Jewish American groups to lobby in Ankara's favor. From this perspective, the strategy worked; not only did the pro-Israel groups begin to help Turkey, but the courtship survived the ups and downs of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and volatile Turkish politics until 2008. As explained below, the relationship collapsed when Erdogan, who had personally invested his prestige to broker secret negotiations between Israelis and Syrians, felt betrayed by Israel's decision to launch an attack on Gaza days after then Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak had visited Ankara. Following the Gaza fighting Erdogan publicly excoriated Israeli president Shimon Peres at a Davos meeting.[10]

A second reason for the Turkish decision to seek a closer relationship with Israel had to do with concerns about Washington's reliability as an arms supplier in an era of greater human rights sensitivities and raging counterinsurgency campaign against Kurds. Early during the Clinton administration, a helicopter sale got bogged down in the halls of Congress, forcing Ankara to withdraw the order rather than face the prospect of a humiliating rejection. With other contracts subjected to these same criteria, Israel represented an alternative source of weapons. Given Israel's desire to develop markets for its relatively small arms industry and to improve relations with Turkey, it was unlikely that human rights or any other consideration would undermine such sales.

Israel derived important advantages such as the ability to train its air force pilots in Turkey, away from the very limited land space offered by Israel itself. The military dimension of the relationship was shrouded in secrecy and, therefore, attracted far more attention than it perhaps deserved. This is not to say that the military relationship was unimportant to either side—after all, Israeli aircraft began to routinely train in Turkey, and Israel successfully participated in contracts to sell Turkey a variety of weaponry—but rather that its strategic importance may have been overrated.

During the 1998 crisis with Syria over Öcalan, Damascus and the rest of the Arab world clearly perceived Turkey's greater self-confidence to be a direct result of its new relationship with Israel. Israeli leaders, by contrast, tried to signal Syria that they were not party to this escalation in tensions. The rest of the Middle East, especially Iran, viewed this relationship with alarm, as suggestions were made in the Turkish press that Israel would take advantage of its flight training to destroy Tehran's weapons-of-mass-destruction capabilities. But there was another aspect to this Turkish-Israeli relationship that escaped scrutiny: the economic dimension. Economic ties, unlike military ones, take much longer to bear fruit. While still lagging the close military ties, the Turkish-Israeli economic relationship blossomed with time, benefiting from the fact that Israel enjoyed a free trade agreement with the United States, which provided Turkish exporters with an additional means of reaching the lucrative American market.

As far as Washington was concerned, the Turkish-Israeli relationship was long overdue. The United States provided some incentives, but by and large it took the position that these two countries could decide on their own the limits to their relationship. Burgeoning ties between the two strong regional allies were extended—albeit before the collapse of the Oslo peace process—to another US ally, Jordan. This three-way relationship was an example of the "rise of new 'security geometries' or alliances in critical regions" in which the United States, by virtue of its dominant role in these countries' international relations, had the ability to influence the wider region in which they coexist.[11] This did not mean that the United States and Turkey saw eye to eye on all Middle Eastern issues. As much as Washington would have liked to enlist Ankara in its efforts to contain Iran, the fact of the matter was that Turkish-Iranian relations were complex and marked by both cooperation and competition befitting the remnants of two imperial powers. Whereas Turkey welcomed US support for the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, Turks also went ahead with a gas pipeline originating in Iran, despite US efforts to isolate Iran. On the other hand, Turks, having complained of Iranian interference in their domestic affairs ranging from support for the PKK to support for Islamist terrorist groups or other Islamic organizations, were keenly aware of their neighbor's growing WMD threat and, hence, welcomed US attempts at limiting Tehran's capabilities.

US-TURKISH RELATIONS UNDER IRAQ'S SHADOW: PHASE 2

The George W. Bush administration took the helm in January 2001, and it included many top officials who had advocated taking a much harder line against Saddam Hussein. The 9/11 attacks and the anthrax episode that shut down Capitol Hill simply provided the rationale for the administration's decision to topple the Iraqi leader. As a result, Iraq began to loom larger in US-Turkish relations.

The initial change in the Bush administration's priorities, its intention to pursue terrorists to the ends of the earth, suited Ankara well. First and foremost, for Turkey the al-Qa'ida threat was a vindication of its own discourse on terrorism. Ankara, therefore, was confident it would receive greater support against the PKK. Moreover, the obscurantist character of both the Taliban and al-Qa'ida enhanced the ruling secular Turkish civilian and military elites' view that making concessions to Islamists, whether in Turkey or in the Middle East, was the beginning of a slippery slope. Turkey was one of the first countries to offer Washington its support for the war on terrorism, and by announcing that Turkish troops would be the first to replace the British peacekeeping forces in Kabul, Ankara further enhanced its image. Turkey tendered not only materiel assistance but also its credentials as a Muslim ally of the United States at a time when many in the Islamic world began to perceive the war on terrorism as a war on Islam. The Ankara government offered its backing despite the fact that large majorities of the Turkish public, according to opinion polls, opposed not only the dispatch of troops to Afghanistan but also the conduct of the US war.[12]

The Afghan campaign was an opportunity to reverse the gains made by a fundamentalist Taliban regime that sought to undermine friendly Central Asian governments. Most importantly, by taking part in the military operations and helping to stabilize the region, Turkey won a chance to further enhance its reputation in the world.[13]

To Turkey's great consternation, the other shoe would soon drop. The Bush administration set its sights on Iraq, which would create a new set of complications in the relationship. Turkey's importance to Washington had been tested early in the Bush administration when Ankara suffered from a disastrous economic crisis unleashed by a February 2001 fight between President Necdet Sezer and Ecevit. The rapid devaluation of the Turkish lira, the collapse of the banking sector due to questionable loans, and the massive layoffs suffered by all sectors of the economy rendered Ecevit's coalition government weak and unpopular. The war on terrorism and Washington's reliance on Turkey for the conduct of its Iraq policy once again highlighted Turkey's strategic importance and convinced the Bush administration—despite internal critics such as Treasury secretary Paul O'Neill—that it deserved to be rescued through a massive bailout, whereas Argentina, undergoing an equally debilitating economic crisis, did not.

By the time Prime Minister Ecevit visited Washington in January 2002, Iraq had clearly moved to the top of the Bush agenda. Soon after his return from Washington, Ecevit started to publicly distance himself from Saddam Hussein and even warned Baghdad's ruler that unless he complied with UN resolutions, President Bush would act against him.[14] This turnabout in Ecevit's traditional stance regarding Iraq was noteworthy. He claimed to have made it clear to President Bush that should the United States decide to act against Iraq, Ankara expected to be consulted in advance. He also insisted on other conditions, including ensuring the safety of the Turkmen in Iraq, the inadmissibility of an independent Kurdish state in the north of Iraq, and the minimization of Turkish economic losses.

It would not be Ecevit's fate to lead Turkey during the 2003 Iraq war. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by former Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan, swept into power in November 2002 by winning one-third of the national vote but almost two-thirds of the parliamentary seats. War in Iraq would be an ironic conundrum to face for a leader who in the 1990s had been a devoted follower of the Islamist Erbakan but had now moderated his discourse. Erdogan, due to the political ban on him, had to temporarily relinquish the job of prime minister to his colleague Abdullah Gul, but he found himself immediately courted by President Bush. The US administration, in full war mode, was hoping to get Turkey's permission to have American troops transit Turkish soil to open a second front against Baghdad. After long and protracted negotiations, the moderate Islamist government decided to support the United States.

The Turkish government drove a hard bargain. It negotiated a large financial package to protect it from the potential negative economic side effects that the war would have entailed. More importantly, it received Washington's approval to enter northern

Iraq in the wake of the US 4th Infantry Division to prevent another refugee crisis reminiscent of 1991. In reality, the Turks were anxious for their presence to be felt in northern Iraq as a deterrent to Iraqi Kurdish aspirations for independence.

Events did not turn out as expected. To everyone's surprise, when the government resolution endorsing the US request came for a vote in the Turkish parliament on March 1, 2003, it failed. Although more people voted in favor than against, members of parliament who abstained while remaining in the chamber, under Turkish parliamentary procedures, were counted as no votes. The parliamentary resolution failed primarily due to AKP's mismanagement and inexperience. In a morning straw poll, party whips had concluded that they had a fifty-vote margin to spare. There was also some confusion regarding the attitude of the military. Although the generals supported the deal, it was clear that both the AKP government and the Turkish General Staff, in view of public opposition to the deployment of US troops, were anxious to deflect responsibility to the other. In an interview with Fikret Bila, a *Milliyet* columnist, three days before the vote, a senior commander openly said that the armed forces opposed the deal with America.[15] The vote, but especially the perception that the military was unenthusiastic about it, elicited a sharp rebuke from Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. Still, as the United States continued to prepare for war, American Special Forces crossed Turkish territory into Iraq to liaise with Kurds and other oppositionists.

Turkish-American relations over Iraq deteriorated further after the March 1 vote. On July 4, 2003, US forces in control of northern Iraq arrested a number of Turkish Special Forces members in the Kurdish town of Sulaymaniyah on suspicion of colluding with ITF members to assassinate the governor of Kirkuk. The Turkish soldiers—who were in northern Iraq with American acquiescence—received the al-Qa'ida treatment: they were hooded and sent to Baghdad for further interrogation.[16] News of the incident shocked the Turkish public and officials, and the arrests became emblematic of the mistrust in Turkish-American relations. Turks began suspecting that the United States was not just intent on punishing Ankara for the March 1 vote. Given Washington's reliance on the Iraqi Kurdish factions, especially after the intensification of the insurgency, it appeared that the United States wanted to sideline Ankara in Iraq in favor of the Kurds. These suspicions were confirmed—though incorrectly, American officials would argue—when the American administrator for Iraq, Ambassador Paul Bremer, sided with the Iraqi Kurds to block a possible deployment of Turkish troops to central Iraq at Washington's request.

The continued war in Iraq further deepened Turkish anxieties about American aims, interests, and capabilities. Ankara expected that among US priorities as the occupying power would be the elimination of the PKK from its hideouts in northern Iraq, but the intensified insurgency prevented the US Central Command from engaging an organization that refrained from attacking American troops. After the PKK abandoned its unilateral cease-fire in 2005, the reluctance of the United States to take on the PKK became a continuous source of frustration in Turkey. But the differences over the PKK represented only the tip of the iceberg. Turkey, which hitherto had objected to the idea of a federal Iraqi state, had to acknowledge after the constitutional developments in Iraq that the new state was going to be federal in structure.

Instead, Ankara articulated what it called "redlines" that it wanted respected—denying the Iraqi Kurds independence and the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Ankara claimed that Kirkuk was a Turkmen city and any attempt at changing its ethnic composition would be unacceptable. By contrast, Iraqi Kurdish leaders insisted on the Kurdish character of the city and sought to return Kurdish refugees displaced by Saddam Hussein's ethnic cleansing in the 1980s and 1990s. Both the transitional administrative law and the new Iraqi constitution called for a referendum to determine whether Kirkuk would join the Kurdish provinces in a future federal Iraqi republic. If Kirkuk were to become part of the Kurdish federal entity, Turks feared that the city's oil riches would ultimately lay the foundation of a future independent Kurdistan.[17]

Turkish leaders continuously voiced concern over the conduct of US military operations. American actions in the northern Iraqi town of Tel Afer, where the majority of the population is of Shi'a Turkmen origin, and in Falluja were severely criticized by AKP leaders and parliamentarians. The AKP and its core constituencies viewed the war in Iraq (and in Afghanistan) as unjustly targeting Muslim populations. Correspondingly, anti-Americanism in Turkey reached unprecedented levels. The new AKP government had pushed the envelope successfully on critical issues such as the European Union and Cyprus—often in opposition to hard-line domestic interests. Hence it found itself vulnerable to accusations of inaction on the PKK bases in northern Iraq, unable to defend against PKK incursions and Iraqi Kurdish aspirations. Were the PKK to ramp up its activities, domestic pressure in Ankara would mount for cross-border military operations. In turn, this would have a deleterious impact on relations with the United States.

THE NEW TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The unpopularity of the Iraq war in the Middle East and the US inability to either control the insurgency or decisively end the conflict created a vacuum in the region. The AKP took advantage of this by first interjecting itself in the Syrian-Israeli negotiation process; Ankara managed to start a serious dialogue between those two enemies that would end with Israel's war on Hamas in 2008–2009. Turkey began to reassess its posture in the Middle East, emboldened by its dynamic economy, ranked sixteenth in the world; its increasing visibility in international politics through such institutions as the G20 and the UN Security Council; its strategic location; and its historical and cultural ties to the Middle East. Erdogan and his foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, increasingly struck a different foreign policy in the region (and elsewhere around regions abutting Turkey). The Turkish government had set its sights on restoring relations with its neighbors, countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria with which it had difficult and often tense exchanges. In part, this policy was driven by Turkey's insatiable need for new markets for its exports, which had become the mainstay of the economy as the Özal reforms of the 1980s had matured.

One of the most dramatic changes occurred in northern Iraq. Although Turkey had been an unabashed foe of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), it implemented a 180-degree policy turn to emerge a close ally of the Kurdish quasi-state. It even opened a consulate in the KRG capital, Arbil, effectively recognizing that region's autonomous status within a federal Iraq.[18] In so doing, the Turks transformed themselves in the eyes of Washington from a nuisance, if not a problem, to US objectives in Iraq into a reliable and helpful ally. In fact, Ankara helped the United States during the negotiations with Baghdad on the status of forces agreement. The change in policy was not done at the behest of Washington but rather because the Turks changed their calculus on Iraq, in part driven by their own domestic Kurdish problem.

Another dramatic turnabout came in relations with Israel. Whereas it was no secret that the AKP leadership was not enamored with Israel, it decided to maintain relations, at times quite cordial, with Jerusalem because being the only regional country with good relations with everyone provided Turkey with an entrée few countries (save perhaps for Egypt) enjoyed. This did not prevent Ankara from criticizing Israel when it deemed necessary. The first shock to Israel occurred after the 2006 Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections; the AKP issued an invitation to Khaled Meshal, head of Hamas's armed wing based in Damascus and the one most responsible for the wave of suicide bombings that Israel suffered from over the years. The invitation to Meshal, who held no elective office, also shocked Washington, which had branded Hamas as a terrorist organization. Things would only get worse: when Israel attacked Hamas in Gaza at the end of 2008, soon after Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert had visited Ankara to discuss the next phase of Syrian-Israeli talks, the AKP decided to unleash on Israel. For Erdogan this had become an almost personal issue, and he did not miss any opportunity to attack Israel publicly. Moreover, as tensions over Iran's suspected nuclear weapons program gathered steam, Erdogan decided to back Iran and focus on Israel's undeclared nuclear weapons, thus providing Tehran with critical diplomatic support and breathing room.

Gone were the days of an Israeli-Turkish alliance, as hyped as it may have been. Worse was to come, however. In May 2010, IHH, a militant Turkish Islamist NGO with both connections to the AKP and a history of activities in Afghanistan and elsewhere often in opposition to the United States, decided to run Israel's sea blockade of Gaza, but Israelis decided to prevent this action. Israeli requests that the flotilla be stopped from leaving Turkey were for the most part ignored. The resulting military operation in international waters was bungled by Israel, and nine of the IHH militants were killed. This proved to be the death knell for the Turkish-Israeli relationship. In Turkey, where Israel had never been popular, the IHH disaster and Israel's refusal to apologize meant that it had ceased to be an ally or a friend. Turkish officials openly said that if Israel refused to apologize and pay compensation, Jerusalem would find Ankara in opposition to its interests in every international forum. Erdogan's tough stand against Israel, his support for Hamas, and the flotilla crisis helped make him the most popular politician on the proverbial Arab street. The flotilla incident also forced the Israelis to relax their grip on Gaza. Turkey had gained a great deal of influence, some at the expense of traditional Arab countries such as Egypt.

The deteriorating relations with Israel and especially the vitriolic attacks by the AKP leadership even before the flotilla debacle had already alarmed Washington and opened the door for the questioning of Turkey's AKP among Israel supporters in Washington. US-Turkish relations were thrown into a tailspin, not because of Israel but because of Iran. Erdogan's insistence that he had been assured of the peaceful intentions of Iran's nuclear program was followed by a Turkish-Brazilian-Iranian gambit designed to prevent the Security Council from passing additional sanctions on Iran. On May 17, 2010, Erdogan and Davutoglu joined their counterparts in Tehran to sign an accord that, according to them, represented the beginning of the end of the Iran nuclear crisis. Washington riposted by announcing that it had reached an agreement with China and Russia, two countries hitherto reluctant to go along with sanctions on Tehran, that a new, tougher sanctions resolution would be presented to the Security Council.

When Brazil and Turkey voted against sanctions at the subsequent UNSC meeting, Washington was particularly upset at Ankara; that a member of the NATO alliance and an EU candidate country would side with Tehran against its Western allies unleashed a torrent of criticism against Turkey.[19] The perception that the AKP government always seemed to be siding with Muslim causes and countries, ranging from Omar al-Bashir in Sudan to Hamas in Palestine and Ahmadinejad in Iran, unnerved many in the Obama administration as many in Washington wondered aloud whether Turkey was abandoning the West. While the Turks were anxious about rising tensions on their border so soon after the Iraq quagmire, they misread US intentions and goals in Iran. For Washington, Iran was more than a regional security threat; it represented a challenge to the Obama administration's nonproliferation agenda and nuclear weapons reduction negotiations with the Russians. An Iran visibly progressing toward nuclear weapons would undermine the administration's nuclear reduction efforts in the US Congress. How Turkey positioned itself on this issue would have important consequences down the road.[20]

The perception that Turkey was forsaking the West was a simplistic reaction to a country making the best of an improved strategic and political landscape. Whether Ankara sought to engage countries and movements that were anti-Western to bring them into the fold, as it claimed, or was trying to emerge as a regional power capable of determining (if not imposing) its own preferences on the Middle East and consequently assuming a greater role in international politics remained to be seen. The general improvement in Turkish-Syrian relations that started after Erdogan became prime minister could potentially have produced long-term dividends.[21] Simply said, Turkey was trying to have its cake and eat it too; it wanted to parlay its Western connections and its newfound stature to carve a policy that would fit Erdogan's grand visions, such as they were, for a robust and powerful Turkey.

THE DISCRETE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE ARAB SPRING

Until the onset of the Arab uprisings in 2011, the AKP government tried to distance itself from the United States but not break with it. Under the AKP, the new foreign policy was an attempt not so much to oppose Washington as to demonstrate that Turkey is an important power. In the minds of AKP leaders, Turkey's geographic location, its much improved economy, its military capabilities, and its historic connections to the Middle East and the Asian continent render Turkey a far more important power than it has aspired to be or been given credit for in the past. The repeated attempts at offering its good offices for mediation in a variety of conflicts, principally in the Middle East, were part and parcel of the AKP's efforts at making Turkey more visible and relevant.

The Arab uprisings proved to be a major catalyst in reigniting close relations between Washington and Ankara. The Obama administration was taken by surprise at the onset of peaceful crowds demonstrating in Tunisia and later in Egypt, leading to the collapse of authoritarian leaderships. As the Arab world struggled with these monumental changes, Turkey emerged in the imagination of American leaders as a country that had successfully managed to marry Islam and democracy. As Obama and Erdogan often exchanged notes and strategies on how to respond to the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, the two leaders forged a close cooperative relationship. When the Syrian crisis erupted and the Syrian ruler, Bashar al-Asad, decided to answer protesters' demands with extreme brutality, both Obama and Erdogan came to the same conclusion: Asad had to be removed. The agreement on the need to see Asad go eventually became an agreement on actual cooperation in trying to remove him by helping the insurgents with arms and other resources. Turkey also proved to be indispensable by giving shelter to as many as 2.7 million refugees from Syria (Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, with smaller populations, have also hosted their share of refugees).

Paradoxically Syria, which had initially served as a catalyst for better Turkish-American relations, ended up being the source of increasing acrimony and tension. Asad's resilience is what upended the relationship. Both the US and Turkey grew increasingly frustrated with the rebels' inability to get rid of the Ba'th regime in Damascus; in fact, both had been overconfident—in part because of what had happened in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt—in predicting early on that Asad's regime had not more than six months of life. Yet by 2013, two years into the revolt and despite significant territorial losses, Asad remained firmly in power, supported mostly by Iran. To expedite Asad's demise, Turkey decided to allow foreign fighters from the rest of the world to travel to Syria across its borders and provided arms and support to an al-Qa'ida affiliate, the al-Nusra Front. The assumption was that the al-Nusra fighters were much better trained, more dedicated, and far more effective than the ragtag groups of moderate rebels. The support for al-Nusra, which was both direct and indirect through pro-government NGOs such as IHH, emerged as the first flashpoint between Obama and Erdogan. During Erdogan's official visit to Washington in May 2013, Obama asked him to cease all support for al-Nusra. Despite the admonition, it took many more months for the Turks to oblige. By that time, however, the foreign fighters pouring into Syria through Turkey and elsewhere had begun to join a new formation, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

US-Turkish relations further deteriorated in October 2014 following ISIS's conquest of Mosul and vast tracks of Syrian and Iraqi territory. The danger posed by ISIS and its ability to defeat Iraqi troops led to a change in American priorities in Syria and Iraq. When ISIS invaded the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani, Obama decided to use his air force to inflict the maximum amount of damage on ISIS's forces, which were equipped with the latest American gear, captured from the Iraqi army in Mosul. Erdogan, by contrast, preferred for ISIS to capture Kobani and thus deal the Syrian

Kurds—specifically the PKK-affiliated Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Syrian Kurdish political party—a setback in its efforts to organize the Syrian Kurds.[22]

In a reversal, Erdogan—worried about the implications of Washington's increasing support for the PYD for the Kurdish question at home and in the region—decided to open up Incirlik and other air bases for American use in expanding anti-ISIS operations. Nonetheless, despite Turkey's gesture and Erdogan's clear unhappiness, the US-PYD cooperation deepened, in large measure because the US military decided that the PYD militia was the only one capable of taking on ISIS on the battlefield. Although the PKK is a named terrorist organization by US law, the PYD, despite its close links to the PKK, is not, and it could therefore receive US support. This was a self-serving loophole used by Washington, although it is probably safe to say that the Syrian Kurds would have risen up amidst the Syrian chaos irrespective of the PYD's presence and the PKK's inspiration. Like their brethren in other countries, they too have suffered at the hands of chauvinist and authoritarian rulers.

The consequences of the American decision to side with the PYD against ISIS in Turkey were profound: Erdogan pulled out of negotiations with the PKK designed to end the bitter conflict at home, and as a result, the war between the Turkish state and the PKK erupted again. However, that did not undermine the US-PYD relationship as the PYD methodically bore down on ISIS targets, capturing the city of Manbij.

Another thorny issue was the presence of the cleric Fethullah Gülen in America. Even before the July 15, 2016, failed coup attempt, the Turkish government had branded the Gülen organization, its former ally, as a terrorist outfit. Following the coup attempt, the Erdogan government, which blamed Gülen for orchestrating it, conducted extensive purges in all state institutions, ranging from the military to universities to the civilian bureaucracy. It also demanded the extradition of Gülen back to Turkey, something the US government, from a legal perspective, could not easily do, even though Turkish authorities argued that they had provided large quantities of documents detailing Gülen's involvement in the coup attempt. Turks were also incensed at the Obama administration's perceived delay in reacting to the coup attempt and offering its support.

As the US through 2016 continued to pursue its fight against ISIS in Iraq, aiming to capture ISIS's capital, Raqqa, relations further soured. Both the Turkish leadership and the Turkish press, which is mostly controlled by the government, went on an anti-American campaign whereby the Obama administration was accused of all kinds of calumnies, ranging from supporting terrorism to undermining Turkey and creating ISIS.[23] The Obama administration remained remarkably silent against these accusations. Moreover, uncharacteristically for the US, it also chose to refrain from criticizing the Turkish government's mammoth purges of the bureaucracy; the imprisonment of opposition politicians, journalists, and ordinary citizens; the dismissals of thousands of academics; the closure of media outlets under emergency regulations; and the scorched-earth tactics that devastated many towns in the Kurdish southeast.

The emergence of the PYD and its alliance with the US changed Turkey's number-one priority in Syria from the overthrow of Asad to preventing the emergence of a consolidated Kurdish autonomous zone. To that end, Ankara launched its own operation, named the Euphrates Shield, into Syria in conjunction with some Syrian rebels, not only to create a wedge between two parts of the Syrian Kurdish territory but also to offer itself as an alternative in the fight against ISIS. The Turkish operation, however, became bogged down in the ISIS-controlled town of al-Bab.[24] An analysis by Aaron Stein pointed out that "the U.S.-led coalition has carried out air strikes supporting Turkey and is providing reconnaissance and targeting assistance for the Turkish air force. However, Turkey has blamed the United States and the coalition for attempting to condition air strikes on guarantees that Turkey will refrain from attacking the SDF."[25] Still, the Turks have been threatening to take on the PYD in northern Syria, possibly intervening in Afrin or even elsewhere. It is unlikely to do this before the Raqqa operation is completed, but were Ankara to choose such a path it would seriously challenge its US alliance.

The 2017 presidential transition in the US has given Turkey some hope that President Donald Trump will be more supportive of Ankara's demands concerning both Gülen and the Syrian Kurdish ascendancy. This remains to be seen, although at the time of writing the PYD remains the only realistic option for the US to pursue the offensive against ISIS in an expedited manner, which the new president, who has made defeating Islamic terrorism his signature priority, strongly desires. One definite outcome of the transition in the US is that, given Turkey's acrimonious relationship with Europe, its disregard for the European Union and, therefore, its much diminished influence, the Trump administration will not lobby for Turkey's accession to the EU. Independently of America, increasing authoritarianism and decline in the rule of law has already doomed that country's European path. Germany has made it clear that it will not even support extended customs union negotiations, much less open new chapters on the road to accession.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps Turkey's greatest contribution to the United States, as Ian Lesser aptly argues, is a degree of freedom of action or power projection in adjacent areas.[26] Prior to 9/11, despite the vagaries of Turkish domestic politics as widely disparate political parties assumed power in Ankara, both countries experienced a marked increase in common concerns and interests, which was further buttressed by the onset of the Arab Spring. This no longer holds true. The wars in Iraq and Syria and the increasing authoritarianism of the AKP have created some distance between them. Moreover, Turkey has been flirting with Russia, siding with Moscow and Tehran over a cease-fire accord in Syria as a way to send a signal to Washington. It has even suggested and taken the first steps to purchase sophisticated S-400 Russian-made antiaircraft systems that are not only incompatible with NATO equipment but also may create a slew of security and intelligence problems for other members of the alliance. Theatrics and the desire to attract attention may explain much of Turkish behavior, but the risks of misunderstandings increase with every passing day.

From the US perspective, because of its geography and history of relations especially within NATO, Turkey remains a strategically important country that Washington would loathe to lose or see distance itself from NATO goals. Trump's election to the presidency, though, increases the likelihood of these outcomes. The Trump administration is too much of an unknown for the Turks and the region as a whole. It has clearly indicated that its number one priority is to fight against "Islamic terrorism," a conceptual approach that is bound to antagonize Erdogan, who has increasingly brought forth Turkey's Islamic identity. He and certainly his admirers have made no secret that they would like to see Erdogan assume the leadership of the Islamic world. He has criticized those who link Islam with terrorism.[27] Trump's unpredictability and dogged opposition to what he calls "radical Islamic extremism" can at any moment unleash, at a minimum, a crisis of words and at worst one of identity and belonging.

Still, Erdogan hopes that Trump will abandon the Syrian Kurds to their fate as soon as ISIS is defeated and that Trump, as evidenced by the latter's refusal to criticize Turkey on a variety of issues, will adopt *realpolitik* approaches to US-Turkish relations. As a result, while unleashing all the propaganda guns on the US, Erdogan has been reluctant to criticize Trump by name, if anything, has even chosen to refer to him almost reverentially.

The old adage that Turkey needs the United States and the European Union and that there are no substitutes for them may no longer be as accurate as before. Europe remains Turkey's single most important source of imports and destination for exports. It is where Turkey's competitiveness is tested. Similarly, the US, through NATO, provides Turkey with a security guarantee without which Ankara could not stand up to Moscow or anyone else. Nevertheless, the increasing nationalism and authoritarianism in Turkey and Erdogan's continuous attacks on its allies have clearly strained relations. As *The Economist* puts it: "Turkey is not about to trade its NATO membership for an alliance with Russia. But Turkey's reliability as a Western partner increasingly looks in doubt."[28] Turkey's increasing unreliability is being compounded by a new American administration that has also sown its share of doubts into the transatlantic alliance.

Notes

1. For an analysis of the period, see George S. Harris, *Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945–1971* (Washington, DC; Stanford, CA: American Enterprise Institute; Hoover Institution, 1972); and Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

2. Cengiz Çandar, "Some Turkish Perspectives on the United States and American Policy Toward Turkey," in Morton Abramowitz, ed., *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 2001), 128–131.

3. Morton Abramowitz, who was the US ambassador to Turkey at the time of the Gulf War, recounts his experience in obtaining Özal's permission to overfly Turkish territory and access to bases for the war in "The Complexities of American Policy Making on Turkey," in Abramowitz, ed., *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, 153–156. Özal, in effect, was challenging the traditional cautious modus operandi of Turkish foreign policy; see Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 48–49.

4. In his memoirs, the resigning chief of the general staff, Necip Torumtay, tells of Özal's preoccupation with northern Iraq and its possible benefits for Turkey; see Necip Torumtay, *Orgeneral Torumtay'in Anilari* [Memoirs of General Torumtay] (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayinlari,

1993), 115–116. Whether Özal, if the opportunity arose, intended to occupy parts of Iraq such as Mosul or Kirkuk has never been clear. In a recent interview, the then commander of land forces, Dogan Güres, reflected on how Özal would complain about the injustice the British had done at the end of World War I by including those Turkish territories in Iraq. Although General Güres claims to have prepared plans for all possible eventualities, Özal never confirmed that this was his intention; *Yeni Safak* (Istanbul), December 31, 2001.

5. Baskin Oran, *Kalkik Horoz: Çekiç Güç ve Kürt Devleti* [Poised hammer, Operation Provide Comfort and a Kurdish state] (Ankara: Bilgi Yayinevi, 1996).

6. Ecevit even publicly thanked the United States for its help in capturing Öcalan; Kemal Kirisci, "US-Turkish Relations: New Uncertainties in a Renewed Partnership," in Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci, eds., *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 134.

7. For more on US-Turkish relations during the Clinton years, see Henri J. Barkey, "The Endless Pursuit: Improving US-Turkish Relations," in Morton Abramowitz, ed., *Friends in Need: Turkey and the United States After September 11* (New York: Century Foundation, 2003).

8. A representative sample of writings on this topic include Alan Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Turkish Periphery Strategy?" in Henri J. Barkey, *Reluctant Neighbor* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), 147–170; Ofra Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: Changing Ties of Middle Eastern Outsiders* (New York: Palgrave, 2004); Meliha Benli Altunisik, "Turkish Policy Toward Israel," in Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari, eds., *Turkey's New World* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), 59–73; Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Policy,* June 1998, 19–29; Anat Lewin, "Turkey and Israel: Reciprocal and Mutual Imagery in the Media, 1994–1999," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 239–261.

9. Yasemin Çongar, "The State of Turkish-American Dialogue," *Private View,* Spring 1999.

10. Selin Nasi, *Turkey-Israel Deal: A Key to Long-Term Reconciliation?,* Israel-Turkey Policy Dialogue Publication Series, Global Political Trends Center and Mitvim, January 2017, http://gpotcenter.org/dosyalar/GPoT_Mitvim_Series_S.Nasi.pdf.

11. Ian O. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey," in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, and F. Stephen Larrabee, eds., *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), 56–57.

12. Some argued that the Turkish government did not really have a choice in the matter precisely because the United States had come to Turkey's rescue in a number of critical junctures, ranging from the 2001 economic crisis to Öcalan's capture and the push to convince the EU to make Turkey a candidate country. For a forceful exposition of this point of view, see Mehmet Ali Birand, "Türkiye'nin ABD'ye eli mahkum . . . " [Turkey is condemned to work with the US], *Posta*, October 11, 2001.

13. Sedat Ergin, "Türkiye'nin Afganistan sinavi" [Turkey's Afghanistan challenge], *Hürriyet,* November 16, 2001.

14. See Cengiz Çandar, "Bagdat'tan Washington'a U dönus?" [A U-turn from Baghdad to Washington], *Yeni Safak*, January 23, 2002; and *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), January 24, 2002.

15. Fikret Bila, "Ucaksavarlar kime?," *Milliyet,* February 26, 2003. The column got front-page billing with a headline that read, "Askerler Rahatsiz" (The soldiers are apprehensive). It was later revealed that Bila had talked to the Land Forces commander Aytac Yalman.

16. This appeared to be a rogue operation conducted by some in the Special Forces command without the knowledge of the higher-ups in the Turkish General Staff. See Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey and Iraq: The Perils (and Prospects) of Proximity," US Institute of Peace Special Report, July 2005, 10.

17. Ibid.

18. For more on Turkey's new Iraq policy, please see Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey's New Engagement in Iraq: Embracing Iraqi Kurdistan," US Institute Special Report #237, May 2010.

19. Steve Cook, "How Do You Say 'Frenemy' in Turkish?," *Foreign Policy,* June 1, 2010, http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/06/01/how-do-you-say-frenemy-in-turkish-2/.

20. Kadri Gürsel, "Türkiye 'Yeni Soğuk Savaş'ın Neresinde?" [Where is Turkey situated in the new Cold War?], *Milliyet,* October 30–31, 2010. This is a two-part analysis that questions Turkey's position on the new cold war.

21. Kemal Kirisci, Nathalie Tocci, and Joshua Walker, "A Neighborhood Rediscovered: Turkey's Transatlantic Value in the Middle East," Brussels Forum Series papers, German Marshall Fund, March 2010.

22. Henri J. Barkey and Selin Nasi, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: From Engagement to the Sidelines," in Sverre Lodgaard, ed., External Powers and the Arab Spring (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2016).

23. "Erdogan Says He Has Evidence US-Led Coalition Has Given Support to Isis," *The Independent*, December 27, 2016.

24. At the time of writing, al-Bab has yet to be captured after almost five months of fighting. For more see, Metin Gürcan, "Kısıtlı harekâttan topyekûn savaşa sürüklenmeme rehberi" [A guide to going from a limited engagement to a full-scale war], December 27, 2016, http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/metin-gurcan/kisitli-harekattan-topyekun-savasa-suruklenmeme-rehberi,16215.

25. Aaron Stein, *Reconciling U.S.-Turkish Interests in Northern Syria*, Council of Foreign Relations Discussion Paper, February 2017, 8. "SDF" refers to Syrian Democratic Forces, the group composed of Arab irregulars aligned with the PYD.

26. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey," 71.

27. "Erdoğan'dan önemli açıklamalar"[Important announcements from Erdogan], *Hürriyet*, February 15, 2017, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/erdogandan-onemli-aciklamalar-40364199.

28. "Getting into Bed with the Bear," *The Economist*, February 18–24, 2017, 46.

CHAPTER 21

THE ARAB UPRISINGS FROM THE US PERSPECTIVE

Mark L. Haas

In June 2009, President Barack Obama gave a major agenda-setting speech in Cairo, Egypt. The president asserted that the spread to Muslim-majority countries of democratic "governments that reflect the will of the people" would be a key outcome that would make these states "ultimately more stable, successful and secure." This development would also result in improved relations with the United States. Obama promised to "welcome all elected, peaceful governments—provided they govern with respect for all their people."[1] Given that the Middle East and North Africa at the time were widely deemed to be the least politically free regions in the world, no one expected Obama's hope for the spread of democracy at the expense of dictatorial regimes to be realized anytime soon.

Events that seemed revolutionary in every sense of the word ran counter to this expectation. Massive political protests against authoritarian governments began in Tunisia in December 2010. In the following years, protests in varying degrees of intensity, but all of major significance, occurred in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen. By early 2012, dictators in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen had been forced from power, and competitive elections followed in the first three of these countries.

This chapter has three primary purposes. First, I summarize key political consequences of the Arab uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East. Second, I analyze how and why US leaders responded to these developments. Prominent in this analysis is a detailed examination of the threats to and opportunities for US interests created by the uprisings. By examining details of the potential costs and benefits for the United States created by mass political protests in the Arab world, we can understand the stakes—and thus the hoped-for outcomes—associated with not only the Arab uprisings but similar protests that might occur in the future. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of various policies the United States might adopt to best advance US security in the aftermath of the protests.

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND THE SPREAD OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB WORLD

Although Obama in his 2009 Cairo speech called for the spread of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa, he had come into office believing that the George W. Bush administration's "freedom agenda"—meaning the use or threat of force to help spread liberal regimes in the Middle East—had been a mistake.[2] He thought his predecessor's policies had resulted in a backlash against the United States that had left it isolated and reviled throughout much of the Islamic world. Thus to restore America's reputation, it was necessary to adopt less forceful and more accommodating actions.

Obama's dominant foreign policy inclinations—especially during his first year as president—reinforced his conclusions about the perceived failings of the Bush administration. Obama's dominant view of international relations was that what united countries—even ideological rivals—was or should be more important to their interactions than what divided them. According to international relations scholar Henry Nau, Obama "has a coherent worldview that highlights 'shared' interests defined by interconnected material problems such as climate, energy, and nonproliferation and de-emphasizes 'sovereign' interests that separate countries along political and moral lines. He tacks away from topics that he believes divide nations—democracy, defense, markets, and unilateral leadership—and toward topics that he believes integrate them—stability, disarmament, regulations, and diplomacy."[3] If shared interests are more important to states' foreign policies than divisive ones, including disputes due to the effects of ideological differences, then policies of engagement should dominate America's relations with rivals, and democracy promotion as a means of advancing US security owing to the creation of shared values with others is not paramount. This perspective helps explain Obama's call for the spread of democracy in his Cairo speech as more of a human rights than a security issue.

Thus, to the Obama administration, the use of force in the service of the spread of democracy was both ineffective (as the Bush administration's policies had apparently demonstrated) and less necessary than some believed because the United States possessed important common interests with illiberal regimes, which could be more determinative of relations than ideological differences. Pragmatic economic and political considerations, most notably a weakened US economy due to the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession, as well as public opinion polls that showed the American public was strongly opposed to additional military interventions, reinforced the inclination against aggressive foreign policies. Obama succinctly expressed his views in his Cairo speech when he asserted that despite the benefits of democracy, "no system of government can or should be imposed upon one nation by any other."[4]

The mass protests that spread across much of the Arab world in 2011 resulted, however, in a new narrative by the president and his advisers. As David Sanger of the *New York Times* wrote, "In his first two years in office, Mr. Obama said little about democratic transformations as a core goal. . . . Now [in 2011] he has begun speaking of them as a central part of the 'alternative narrative' to [that of ideological enemies, e.g.,] Al Qaeda's theology, or Iran's."[5] Or as Deputy National Security Adviser Benjamin J. Rhodes stated: "The president wanted to clearly and unequivocally embrace change in the region [the Middle East and North Africa]. It was necessary for him to step back and say that not only does he support the aspirations of the people we have seen in the streets, but supporting them is in our long-term interest."[6] According to Obama in a major policy speech given in May 2011, which laid out his administration's vision for US–Middle Eastern relations in light of the Arab uprisings:

> We must acknowledge that a strategy based solely upon the narrow pursuit of [material] interests . . . will only feed the suspicion [among the peoples of the Middle East] that has festered for years that the United States pursues our interests at their expense. [As a result,] a failure to change our approach threatens a deepening spiral of division between the United States and the Arab world. . . . Our support for [liberal] principles is not a secondary interest. Today I want to make it clear that it is a top priority that must be translated into concrete actions, and supported by all of the diplomatic, economic and strategic tools at our disposal. . . . It will be the policy of the United States to promote reform across the region, and to support transitions to democracy. . . . The United States of America was founded on the belief that people should govern themselves. And now we cannot hesitate to stand squarely on the side of those who are reaching for their rights, knowing that their success will bring about a world that is more peaceful, more stable, and more just.[7]

The Obama administration's willingness to act on this rhetoric in response to the Arab uprisings varied massively, from offering very little support of protestors even as they were crushed by their government (in Bahrain) to using force to overthrow a dictator in an effort to bring about regime change (in Libya). The following section provides a summary of the key developments and US reactions to them in six countries: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen (the four countries in which protests resulted in the removal of dictators from power), Bahrain, and Syria, which descended into brutal civil war. The principal focus in this section is on the early stages of the protests in 2011 and 2012; various major developments after these years are discussed later in the chapter.

INITIAL RESPONSES TO THE ARAB UPRISINGS

The Arab uprisings began in Tunisia in December 2010 when a street vendor, Mohammed Bouazizi, set himself on fire outside a municipal building in the city of Sidi Bouzid to protest his lack of economic opportunity, harassment by the police, and the regime's high level of corruption. This act of defiance led to widespread popular protests throughout the country, which forced the dictatorial leader, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled Tunisia for twenty-three years, to flee the state on January 14, 2011. After Ben Ali went into exile, power moved to Mohammed Ghannouchi, who had been Ben Ali's longest-serving prime minister. The continued power of one of Ben Ali's allies resulted in more mass protests, which ultimately led to Ghannouchi's resignation on February 27, 2011. An interim government that was largely free of Ben Ali's cronies promised to hold free elections, draft a constitution, and create a new democratic government. Elections for the National Constituent Assembly—which were the first free elections in the country's history—were held in October 2011, with the moderate Islamist party Ennahda winning a plurality of votes. The National Assembly drafted a constitution in December 2011, which, according to Human Rights Watch, possessed some favorable protections of human rights.[8]

The US response to the Tunisian demonstrations was cautious, no doubt largely because Ben Ali was considered an ally in US counterterrorism efforts. Moreover, because the uprisings in Tunisia were the first ones to occur in the region, US leaders, like most others, doubted the protestors could successfully overthrow their government. A week before Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emphasized the need for political reform in Tunisia and the protestors' right to assemble, but she also stressed that the United States was "not taking sides" between the government and the protestors.[9] Only after Ben Ali's ouster did Obama applaud "the courage and dignity of the Tunisian people" and call on the government to "hold free and fair elections in the near future."[10] The US government also pledged a modest amount ($32 million) to aid Tunisia's political transition to a democratic regime. In the 2011 State of the Union Address, Obama praised the revolution in Tunisia, "where the will of the people proved more powerful than the writ of a dictator," and he expressed support for the "democratic aspirations of all people.[11]

The US response was much more active in support of protestors in Egypt, even though Egypt had been a critical ally of the United States since the late 1970s. Mass protests began in Egypt on January 25, 2011, eleven days after the removal of Ben Ali in Tunisia. Over the next eighteen days, an estimated six million Egyptians took to the streets, making these protests the largest pro-democracy demonstrations in Arab history.[12] By January 29, which was only four days into the Egyptian demonstrations, the Obama administration had decided that it would support a political transition in Egypt and that an emissary would be sent to Hosni Mubarak "to explain that, in the judgment of the United States, he could not survive the protests. The emissary [Frank Wisner, the former ambassador to Egypt] would tell Mubarak that his best option was to try to leave a positive legacy by steering the country toward a real democratic transformation."[13] On February 1, Obama publicly announced that the end of Mubarak's rule "must begin now."[14] The Americans also pressured the Egyptian military not to fire on the protestors while reinforcing the message to the Egyptian armed forces that Mubarak had to go.[15] Obama decided to push for Mubarak's removal from power despite objections from key advisers (most notably Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen, and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman) and from international allies, most notably Saudi Arabia (more about the latter below).[16]

Mubarak was removed from office on February 11, and largely free and competitive parliamentary elections were held roughly ten months later. The Muslim Brotherhood won 45 percent of the seats in the lower house (the People's Assembly) and 58 percent of the contested seats in the upper house (the Shura Council). The more hard-line Salafi Islamists won 25 percent of the seats in both houses. Liberal parties came in a distant third.[17] Mohamed Morsi, a senior Muslim Brotherhood leader, was elected president in the summer of 2012. Despite the fact that an Islamist party dominated Egypt's elections, the Obama White House both recognized the elections as legitimate and promised to engage the new regime. This was a major change from the Bush administration, which had isolated Islamist parties even if they won competitive elections (most notably in the case of America's relations with Hamas, which won Palestinian parliamentary elections in Gaza in 2006).[18]

The Obama administration's response to demonstrations in Libya were the most forceful—literally—of any country involved in the Arab uprisings. Mass protests began in Libya on February 15, 2011, four days after Mubarak's ouster. Unlike in Egypt, the Gadafi government responded to the demonstrations with brute force as it led a violent campaign to crush opponents of the regime, killing thousands in the first month of conflict.[19] Rather than ending the protests, the government's brutality only fueled more resentment and support for the rebels' cause, including mass defections from the military. By March, Libya was in a state of civil war, with the opposition controlling much of the eastern half of the country. On March 17, with Gadafi's forces advancing into opposition strongholds and a likely massacre imminent, the United Nations Security Council—led by France, Britain, and the United States—voted "to take all necessary measures to protect civilians under threat of attack in the country." Although the explicit objective of UN Resolution 1973 was to protect Libyan civilians from their government, in practice the resolution worked for regime change by tipping the military balance of power in favor of the opposition.[20] On March 19, NATO fighters began to bomb the Libyan military while simultaneously imposing a blockade on Libyan ports to prevent weapons from entering the country.[21] Tripoli fell into rebel hands in August 2011, and on October 20 Gadafi was captured and killed. Libya held parliamentary elections the following July. The leading party was the National Forces Alliance, which was a coalition headed by the relatively liberal politician Mahmoud Jibril (a former political science professor at the University of Pittsburgh). The Muslim Brotherhood's Justice and Construction Party came in second. This was Libya's first democratic election in its history.

Although the French led the charge pushing for the United Nations to authorize the creation of a no-fly zone in Libya, the Obama administration played the key role in massively strengthening the resolution into granting permission for a full-scale military intervention. Gadafi was primarily using tanks, not planes, to crush the rebellion, so a no-fly zone would have been largely ineffective in stopping the regime.[22] The US military also played a critical part in the intervention, especially in the areas of reconnaissance, intelligence, heavy airlift, and refueling.

Yemen is the fourth country that experienced a leadership change resulting from popular protests. Demonstrations began in Yemen in January 2011, and they intensified over the next several months. The response to the protests by President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had governed since 1978, was harsh as government troops killed scores of protestors. As in Libya, this brutality both fueled animosity toward the regime and led key political and military leaders to defect to the side of the demonstrators. In April, US leaders, who had long supported Saleh and viewed his government as a critical ally against the Yemeni branch of al-Qa'ida, concluded that he was unlikely to implement the political reforms necessary to calm domestic unrest. The Obama administration, as a result, concluded that Saleh must be eased out of power.[23] In November, Saleh accepted a proposal in which he would resign as president in exchange for immunity from prosecution for him and his family. In February 2012, Saleh's vice president, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, was elected president in a one-candidate election in which he won an astronomical 99.8 percent of the votes. US leaders nevertheless praised the election as a "democratic" one.[24]

America's reactions to protests in Bahrain and Syria are also worth exploring. The Bahraini case, even more than Yemen, shows the limits of US support of democratization in some allies; the Syrian case demonstrates the Obama administration's unwillingness to intervene militarily to bring about regime change in some enemy states due to perceived high costs associated with this action.

Pro-democracy protests began in Bahrain on February 14, 2011, to which the government responded with deadly force. The Bahraini regime not only killed dozens of activists but in March declared a state of emergency that resulted in Bahrain taking on the "likeness of a police state." The result was "mass arrests, mass firings of government workers [and] reports of torture. . . . Emergency laws [gave] the security forces the right to search houses at will without a warrant and dissolve any organization, including legal political parties, deemed a danger to the state."[25] Bahrain received international support for this crackdown when Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), at the request of Bahrain's monarch, sent two thousand troops into Bahrain to help suppress the demonstrators.[26]

The Obama administration's response to the crushing of protests for political reform in Bahrain, which houses the US Navy's 5th Fleet, was muted. In May 2011, Obama did state that "the only way forward is for the [Bahraini] government and opposition to engage in a dialogue, and you can't have a real dialogue when parts of the peaceful opposition are in jail." Senior US officials, including Secretary of Defense Gates and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Feltman, also visited Bahrain to encourage the ruling family to accelerate democratic reforms.[27] Unlike with other Arab Spring countries, though, the administration did not condemn or sanction the Bahraini government or call for its removal.[28] It even continued to sell weapons to Bahrain, although items that are particularly good at crowd control—such as tear gas, tear gas launchers, and Humvees—were banned in the sales.[29]

Political protests in Syria began on March 15, 2011. A fierce governmental crackdown on demonstrators resulted in the galvanization of opposition forces, including soldiers who defected from the Syrian army. The result was the beginning of a brutal civil war that is still ongoing at the time of this writing (fall 2017). The war has resulted in more than four hundred thousand deaths and more than five million refugees.

During the early stages of the Syrian uprising, Obama left open the possibility that President Bashar al-Asad could remain in power if he adopted meaningful liberalization policies. On May 19, 2011, Obama stated that Asad "can lead the transition, or get out of the way."[30] Over the course of the summer, as Syrian brutality escalated, US policymakers grew increasingly critical of the Asad government in both word and deed, including meeting with opposition leaders in Syria and encouraging the European Union to increase sanctions against the regime. European sanctions against Syria would have been more effective than US sanctions because European countries interacted with Syria on an economic level much more than did the United States; a quarter of Syria's trade in 2011 was with the EU.[31] Finally, on August 18, the United States officially called on Asad to go. President Obama stated: "The future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President Bashar al-Asad is standing in their way. We have consistently said that President Asad must lead a democratic transition or get out of the way. He has not led. For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Asad to step aside."[32] In a coordinated diplomatic onslaught, the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the European Union did the same.

The United States also took some measures designed to put stress on the Syrian government and help the resistance. It led the way in organizing a new series of punishing economic sanctions against Syria, primarily beginning in August 2011. The United States provided the Syrian rebels with some weaponry, and its Middle Eastern allies (with US acquiescence), led by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, did so more extensively. In August 2012, Obama warned the Syrian regime that the use of chemical weapons was a "redline" for the United States that would result in "enormous consequences," likely including military force.[33] In December, the Obama administration announced that it would formally recognize a coalition of Syrian opposition groups as that country's legitimate representative, which further isolated the Asad regime.[34]

The Obama administration was, however, unwilling to do in Syria what it had done in Libya: engage in direct military intervention with sufficiently powerful force to overthrow a noxious regime. A number of concerns were central to this choice. The Obama White House feared being dragged into and therefore escalating a proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia (more about this below). Most important from the US point of view was the number of hard-line Islamist groups that are members of the Syrian opposition. Their empowerment could have resulted in an even more threatening situation for the United States. It is one thing to try to overthrow a dictator like Asad by supporting democratic opposition forces. It is much riskier to try to overthrow one ideological enemy (Asad's secular authoritarian regime) by aiding and arming another (hard-line Islamists).

WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR THE UNITED STATES IN THE ERA OF THE ARAB UPRISINGS?

As the analysis in the previous section demonstrates, US policies concerning countries experiencing mass political protests for more democratic freedoms have exhibited considerable variation, from active support of the protests in some cases to acquiescence of governmental crackdowns in others. Some analysts explain this variation as a by-product of a conflict between American values and interests.[35] To this perspective, the support of democracy is an important normative objective that flows out of Americans' ideological beliefs, but US leaders will tend to support this objective only as long as these efforts do not endanger US material interests. When this condition is not met, as was the case, for example, in Bahrain, US leaders are likely to do relatively little to support protestors even in the face of brutal governmental oppression.

The "values versus interests" explanation of US actions during the Arab uprisings is correct in that there are major costs associated with democracy promotion, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. This account misses, however, the critical fact that support of pro-democracy movements is not only an important US value but also potentially creates major security benefits for the United States. Instead of values *versus* interests, values *and* interests may exist synergistically with the spread of democracy advancing US security.[36] The following analysis explains the potential costs and benefits to US interests that may be created by democratization in the Middle East, thereby providing a framework for understanding US responses to the protests. Because the United States, especially in the short run, was more likely to reap the costs than the benefits, it is not surprising that the Obama administration was most often reluctant to offer major, costly support to the protestors across the region. My primary goal in the following analysis is not to provide a comprehensive recounting of events. Instead, I seek to provide a framework to help understand the stakes created for the United States by the uprisings.

The Potential Costs for the United States of Democracy Support in the Arab World

Efforts to topple authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa and replace them with democratic ones could harm US interests in two principal ways. First, the spread of democracy in the region could very well result in the replacement of allies with governments that are much more hostile to the United States. Notice that this cost is borne even if efforts at regime change are successful and authoritarian governments are replaced by democratic ones. Second, there was good reason to expect that efforts to topple authoritarian regimes and replace them with democratic ones would not be successful, and that these policies would therefore end up making a bad situation considerably worse. The weakening of authoritarian governments could result in the emergence of even more repressive and hostile regimes. Moreover, domestic conflict in one state could help fuel sectarian and ideological conflict throughout the region, thereby turning civil wars into regional ones. These potential costs created powerful barriers to US leaders offering major aid to the Arab Spring protestors.

The successful spread of democratic governments in the Middle East and North Africa could result in the estrangement or loss of US allies for three main reasons. First, states that replace authoritarian regimes with more democratic ones may empower groups that are more suspicious of, even hostile to, the United States than are many authoritarian leaders. At a minimum, the creation of more democratic governments means that public opinion will have a much greater impact on foreign policies than is the case in authoritarian states. This development is potentially problematic for US interests because the populace in many Muslim-majority countries often has negative views of US policies. Since the September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, numerous surveys reveal, as one expert on the subject summarizes, that "the overwhelming majority of the Arab publics, even (sometimes *especially*) in countries whose governments are particularly close allies of the United States (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), identified the United States as one of the two most threatening states to them, after Israel."[37] These negative sentiments were particularly strong toward the George W. Bush administration, even though its leaders openly claimed to be champions of freedom and democracy in the Arab world. Many Arabs who were surveyed doubted that the United States was genuinely committed to the advancement of their rights and believed instead that it using the rhetoric of democracy promotion as an excuse to advance US material interests, such as eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program, maintaining access to cheap oil, and better protecting Israel.

Even more troubling for US interests is the fact that the negative views of the United States remained strong even after the Arab uprisings began and despite US support for the demonstrators in a number of cases. A July 2011 Zogby International poll found that favorable attitudes among citizens of Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE dropped after Obama became president. People in Egypt, Lebanon, and the UAE believed that the United States was a key source of their problems because "US interference in the Arab world" is "very much" an obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa. Despite the Obama administration's push for Mubarak's ouster in response to popular protests, nearly 40 percent of Egyptians in an April 2011 Pew poll believed that the United States played a negative role in the successful uprisings in their country.[38] In a spring 2012 Pew Research survey, only 19 percent of Egyptians possessed favorable views of the United States, which was lower than in 2008.[39] These trends continued throughout Obama's presidency. US favorability rankings in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, for example, were lower near the end of Obama's time in office than at the beginning.[40]

A key implication of these polling data for US interests during the Arab uprisings is clear. The establishment of more democratic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa was likely to lead, at least in the short run, to the diminishment of US influence because Arab publics were more suspicious of and opposed to the United States than were authoritarian allies such as Ben Ali and Mubarak, who had been ousted from power. Arab public opinion is even more hostile toward Israel than toward the United States, further complicating matters for US leaders because they have repeatedly expressed strong support for Israel. These points help explain why some enemies of the United States, most notably Iran, welcomed the Arab uprisings even though the spread of democracy also posed an ideological challenge to Iran's illiberal Islamist theocracy.[41]

Despite the potential downside to US interests created by the enhanced power of Arab public opinion on policymaking, there was important good news for the United States on this topic. Large majorities of Arabs who possessed negative views of the United States did so not because of ideological antipathy but because of opposition to particular US policies in the region. Many Muslims were particularly critical of America's one-sided support of Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Also, US-led military intervention in the region, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq, generated an anti-US backlash, as did America's use of drone strikes to target enemies in Muslim-majority countries.[42] Instead of ideological antipathy, large percentages of people in Muslim-majority countries, especially among younger cohorts, expressed an ideological attraction to the United States. In a spring 2012 survey, for example, nearly 60 percent of Tunisians (this number was 72 percent for eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds) and 40 percent of Egyptians, Jordanians, and Lebanese said that they liked American ideas about democracy.[43]

The facts that majorities of people in many Muslim-majority countries possessed negative opinions of the United States primarily because of its policies while many individuals held positive views of US principles are important because they point to the potentially mutable nature of the negativity. America's policies are much more likely to change than are its institutional structures and ideological beliefs. If US actions on the issues most disliked by Muslims altered or are at least perceived in a more positive light, favorable attitudes toward the United States among Arab publics are likely to increase, especially given the ideological attraction that many Muslims feel for the United States.[44]

To state the preceding analysis another way, US deployment of "hard" (primarily military) power and one-sided support of Israel has resulted in negative views of the United States that have in many cases overwhelmed the positive feelings created by America's considerable "soft power," or the attractiveness of its extensive individual liberties and representative form of government. More accommodating policies in some areas (see some options in greater detail below) may allow sympathy created by ideological attraction to dominate public opinion. If so, the empowerment of public sentiment due to the success of popular uprisings may not result in a significant diminishment of US influence and interests. To the contrary, this development may place US influence on a more stable foundation than when the United States relied almost exclusively on the favor of authoritarian leaders.[45]

A second way in which the spread of more democratic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa may reduce the number of US allies in the region is by facilitating the rise to power of Islamist parties. This second pathway is related to but distinct from the previous one. The preceding analysis examined the views of public opinion *as a whole* across a number of Muslim-majority countries. This second pathway analyzes the preferences of the specific parties that are most likely, at least in the short run, to dominate decision making in newly democratic states.

Islamist parties did very well in those countries that had competitive elections after ousting a dictator from power. They dominated during the early elections in Egypt and Tunisia and came in second in Libya. They are also among the most powerful opposition forces fighting the Asad government in Syria's civil war. On one level, these outcomes may seem surprising because democracy activists and liberals appeared to lead many of the Arab Spring uprisings. On another level, however, these outcomes were to be anticipated. Islamist parties, although persecuted in most secular authoritarian regimes, in many cases continued to operate. When dictatorial governments fell, Islamists had major institutional and organizational advantages—such as existing fund-raising and patronage networks, a brand name, and longtime members who were highly invested in the cause—in comparison with most liberal and secular groups, many of which had also been targeted by authoritarian regimes.

The growing political power of Islamist parties in the era of the Arab uprisings is potentially detrimental to US interests if Islamists possess an ideological antipathy toward the United States. Previous analysis revealed that public opinion in many Muslim-majority countries is suspicious of the United States primarily because of its policies. Ideology-based hostility is much worse from the US perspective because it implies more enduring, immutable, and intense hostility.

Although this last statement will be true for hard-line Islamist groups, such as al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, the Islamic State, many Wahhabists in the religious establishment in Saudi Arabia, and many of the ruling political factions in Iran, the good news for the United States is that it is not necessarily true for all Islamists, especially those that support key tenets of liberal democracy.[46] Hard-line Islamists believe that a primary objective of government is the regulation of personal virtue based on a narrow and literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet. This position most often requires that religious authorities exercise important input into political decision making and also that there be limits on popular sovereignty. To hard-line Islamists, majority preferences should not take precedence over *shari'a,* or Islamic law. Hard-liners also tend not to support equal rights for all groups, especially women and religious minorities.

Liberal Islamists, like other Islamists, base their political prescriptions on Islamic principles and tenets. The *content* of these prescriptions is, however, largely liberal. Liberal Islamists include leaders of the Ennahda Party in Tunisia, the Justice and Development Party in Turkey (at least in the first decade of the 2000s, after which its leaders moved in a much more illiberal direction—see below), Iranian reformers, and at least some components of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Leaders of these groups assert, for example, that God gave individuals free will, which makes religious compulsion immoral. Similarly, because humans' interpretations of the Qur'an and God's will are always imperfect, pluralism, tolerance, democracy, separation of powers, the protection of minority rights, and an evolving interpretation of scripture are all necessities.[47]

Policies toward the United States are likely to vary significantly between these varieties of Islamists. Hard-line Islamists have been and are likely to continue to be intensely hostile to the United States. Hard-liners tend to view the United States as an inevitable enemy whose interests and values are fundamentally opposed to Muslims.

For liberal Islamists, in contrast, the ideological barriers to close ties with the United States are not nearly as great. To the contrary, because liberal Islamists are dedicated to many of the political institutions that are hallmarks of Western liberal regimes, leaders of these parties often advocate close ties with Western nations as a means of achieving their domestic goals. This was the case, for example, in two instances when liberal Islamists held significant political power in Middle Eastern countries before the Arab uprisings began: Iranian reformers from 1997 to 2005 and the Justice and Development Party in Turkey beginning in 2003. These groups pushed for extensive cooperation with the United States as a key means of facilitating the realization of their domestic liberalizing objectives.[48] To the extent that these cases are representative of the policies of other liberal Islamist groups, the election of these parties may not be very harmful for US interests.

A final way in which the spread of democratic regimes in general and US support of these outcomes in particular may damage America's alliance relationships pertains to those illiberal allies of the United States that do not succumb to revolution. US support of democracy is likely to cause these countries to view the United States as a fickle friend who is setting a very bad precedent, detrimental to their core interests.

This development occurred in a critical case: US relations with Saudi Arabia. Saudi leaders, as two *New York Times* reporters summarized shortly after Mubarak's fall, possessed "little patience with American messages about embracing what Mr. Obama calls 'universal values,' including peaceful protests."[49] One Arab official stated that King Abdullah's willingness to listen to the Obama administration "evaporated" after Mubarak was forced from power in February 2011.[50] Another prominent Saudi analyst with ties to Saudi leaders similarly claimed that a "tectonic shift has occurred in the U.S.-Saudi relationship." Although the United States and Saudi Arabia still had a number of major common interests, in the wake of the events of 2011 "Riyadh intends to pursue a much more assertive foreign policy, at times conflicting with American interests."[51] In keeping with this prediction, Saudi Arabia became a champion of counterrevolution in neighboring kingdoms, which made US leaders choose between supporting democracy promotion and a longtime ally that is one of the largest oil-producing countries in the world. The Americans in key cases opted for the latter. Thus, as discussed above, when the Bahraini government, with the help of Saudi troops, crushed political demonstrations beginning in March 2011, the Obama administration offered almost no criticism of the brutality. Saudi actions highlighted the hypocrisy of US policies. At a minimum, this hypocrisy likely amplified the massive doubts among Muslims that the United States was not genuinely interested in advancing their rights. At a maximum, these actions helped fuel Muslim animosity as US leaders were viewed as supporters of governmental repression. Either case damaged US soft power.

Even more harmful for US interests were Saudi and American leaders' different reactions to the Arab Spring protests, which highlighted the ideological competition between the two countries. In those instances when the United States pushed allied governments to implement political reforms, such as in Jordan and Morocco, the Saudis advocated that governments take a tough line.[52] In attempts to gain influence in newly revolutionized states, the Saudis reportedly funded hard-line Islamist groups, which were likely to be hostile to the United States.[53]

In addition to losses or increased frictions with allies, a second way in which mass protests in the Arab world could endanger US interests is by fueling or facilitating international conflict. The first set of costs, explored above, are likely to occur if states successfully change from authoritarian to democratic regimes. The second set of costs are created when protests are successful in weakening or overthrowing authoritarian governments but unsuccessful in establishing a stable democracy in the aftermath of these developments.[54]

The weakening of authoritarian governments due to popular protests is likely to result in significant domestic and/or international violence by three different pathways. First, the weakening of authoritarian regimes may allow the eruption of sectarian or ideological hostilities that had been repressed. Political scientists have asserted that many societies tend to cycle in a "tyranny-anarchy loop."[55] This term refers to the tendency for many societies to fluctuate between the opposing political outcomes of tyranny and anarchy, while finding it very difficult to exit the cycle and establish stable democracies.

The origins of this loop are rooted in the fact that the overthrow of dictatorial regimes, while obviously beneficial in key respects, also has potential major costs if overwhelming governmental power is necessary to maintain order among opposing societal groups. The more divided a society, the more governmental power must be exerted to prevent these divisions from devolving into violence. Many countries in the Middle East and North Africa are riven by fierce ethnic (e.g., Kurds versus Arabs), religious (e.g., Sunni versus Shi'a Muslims), and ideological (e.g., various types of Islamists, liberals, and secular authoritarian) divisions. When the coercive power of a dictatorial regime is removed, factional disputes that had been forced into submission are now able to surface. It is mainly for this reason that al-Qa'ida's leaders often praised the Arab uprisings. They understood that the overthrow of dictatorial regimes allowed them much greater operational room to try to achieve their extremist ideological agenda.[56] The overthrow of tyrannies in these conditions are more likely to result in anarchy and widespread civil conflict than in democracy. The end result of civil war is often a return to tyranny as the most successful violent group emerges victorious, thereby closing the loop and setting the stage to begin again the cycle.

Syria is, at the time of this writing, the most powerful display of the tendency for the weakening of an authoritarian regime to result in anarchy and civil war. The weakening of Asad's regime has allowed sectarian and ideological animosities to explode. Thus the civil war in Syria is much more than a product of the Syrian people's struggle to liberate themselves from a dictator. It is also a struggle both between Syria's Sunni Muslim majority and the minority Alawite Muslim sect (to which Asad belongs), who fear repression and reprisals if they lose their position of political dominance, and among extremist Islamists, moderate Islamists, and secular groups, all of which are part of the opposition. In parts of Syria, tyranny has already been reestablished, most notably in the territory controlled by the extremist Islamic State (ISIS).

In further support of the analytic value of the tyranny-anarchy loop is the fact that all four of the countries that ousted a dictator in 2011 (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and

Yemen) either suffered or are currently suffering from the effects of anarchy created by weak governments and powerful societal divisions. Yemen has been in a civil war since 2015, divided between forces loyal to the government, separatists in the southern part of the country, rival radical Islamist groups (including al-Qa'ida affiliates and factions loyal to ISIS), and Houthi militias (a Shi'a sect).[57] Libya, too, has been racked by armed hostilities involving multiple enemies, including conflict among multiple competing governments including militants loyal to ISIS who have carried out a series of executions, beheadings, and amputations in territory they control.[58] Frequent mass political protests both for and against the Muslim Brotherhood–led government in Egypt (which began governing in June 2012) helped pave the way for a military coup in July 2013. Egypt under the subsequent government led by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (a former general) has in some ways become even more repressive than it was during Mubarak's reign.[59] As is often the case, the tyranny-anarchy loop has come full circle in Egypt.

Only in Tunisia has the tyranny-anarchy cycle appeared to have stopped on democracy, though the situation remains fragile. Beginning in 2015, Freedom House, a nonpartisan democracy-advocacy group, labeled Tunisia a free country. This was the first such designation of an Arab country by the organization in over forty years. Freedom House justified the classification based on Tunisia's "adoption of a progressive constitution, governance improvements under a consensus-based caretaker administration, and the holding of free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections, all with a high degree of transparency."[60] Political stability and dedication to democratic norms remain precarious, however. Tunisia has sent more fighters abroad to join ISIS than any other country (roughly 5,500 by 2017, according to one estimate). Their return, the likelihood of which increases the more ISIS is weakened, would be a significant threat to Tunisia's political development. This threat would compound the danger posed by the fact that Tunisia already confronts a terrorist insurgency led by Islamic radical groups, including al-Qa'ida and ISIS affiliates.[61]

The increased likelihood that overthrowing or weakening authoritarian regimes will result in widespread violence as long-repressed societal disputes are free to surface is exacerbated by the fact that sectarian or ideological civil wars in one country frequently create powerful incentives for foreign powers to intervene on behalf of their religious, ethnic, or ideological brethren. These incentives not only amplify the intensity of the original conflict but also increase the odds of the violence spreading to other countries. In the latter case, civil wars can grow into regional conflicts.

Policymakers face incentives to intervene in sectarian or ideological battles in other countries because leaders' identities often have major effects on their national interests and international relations. Policymakers frequently view others with similar identities—for example, shared ethnicity or similar religious or ideological beliefs—to be natural allies and those with opposing identities to be likely enemies.[62] Given these views, leaders possess major security interests in seeing like-minded individuals come to power in other countries. Politicians in support of virtually all ideological beliefs—monarchical, liberal, fascist, communist, and religious—have all attempted to export, including by force, their defining ideological principles and institutions.[63]

When a state is vulnerable to regime change, as clearly occurs during periods of massive political protests, is precisely when foreign leaders confront very strong incentives to help their ideological or sectarian allies in the contested state. If state X that is dedicated to identity A (e.g., a particular ideology or ethnicity or set of religious beliefs) is susceptible to revolution to identity B, adherents to A and B in other countries will have a strong security interest in seeing their brethren emerge victorious in state X.[64] Proponents of identity A in other states will fear that a revolution to identity B will result in a reduction of their international influence and a probable gain in influence for proponents of identity B in other countries. The same calculations will create incentives for supporters of identity B abroad to aid revolutionary forces in state X. The fluidity of internal politics in domestically vulnerable states, in sum, will tend to push leaders in other countries to view outcomes as a security gain or a loss for either themselves or their rivals.

To put the preceding analysis another way, when states are vulnerable to revolution, representatives of rival identities in other countries are caught in an "identity security dilemma."[65] Successful regime change from identity A to identity B in state X will tend to make proponents of B in other countries more secure. The more identity B spreads or is empowered, the fewer the enemies in the system. B's increase in security, though, will make proponents of identity A less secure. The greater the number of governments that are dedicated to identity B, the more proponents of A will feel surrounded by enemies. Given these anticipated outcomes resulting from a civil war in state X, proponents of identity A will confront powerful incentives to interfere in X to maintain the identity—and thus security—status quo, while B will be inclined to interfere to take advantage of a newly created opportunity to increase international influence and security at A's expense.

The incentives for leaders to support their ideological or sectarian brethren in foreign disputes are clearly at work in the Syrian civil war, which is to a certain degree a proxy conflict for the regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Iran has provided money, logistical support, and arms to the Asad regime, a longtime ally of Tehran that happens to be controlled by Alawites, an offshoot of Shiism. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, meanwhile, have helped arm Sunni opposition groups, with apparent favoritism toward more hard-line Islamist parties. These three Gulf nations clearly believe that the empowerment of Sunni Islamists will give them much more influence in Syria, and reduce that of Iran, than a Syria controlled by the Asad government. Similar dynamics are occurring in Yemen, where Iran is believed to be taking advantage of retreating governmental power and arming rebellious Shi'a tribes, while Saudi Arabia is supporting the Sunni-led government.[66]

A third way in which the overthrow of authoritarian regimes could increase the likelihood of conflict has to do with the perils of democratizing regimes. As two authorities on this subject state, "History shows that the consolidation of democracy tends to promote peace and stability, but the initial stages of democratization can stimulate both international and civil wars."[67] The key to avoiding conflict in democratizing regimes is the existence of effective political, legal, and civic institutions that help states manage the demands of groups that had previously been excluded from the levers of power. An important component of this process is the implementation of effective power-sharing arrangements that mitigate the divisive effects created by ethnic and sectarian differences. These institutions include: separation of powers and checks and balances designed to help restrain governmental power and protect political pluralism and minority rights; strong civil society groups that are able to push back against governmental excesses; an apolitical military; an independent transparent judiciary that enforces the rule of law; and a free press. "When these institutions are deformed or weak, politicians are better able to resort to nationalist or sectarian appeals, tarring their opponents as enemies of the nation, in order to prevail in electoral competition. The use of such appeals generally heightens the prospect that democratization will stimulate hostilities at home and abroad."[68] Unfortunately, many Middle Eastern and North African states, with their stunted political development due to decades of dictatorial rule and political oppression, are lacking in precisely those institutions and values that make democratic transitions most likely to succeed without creating increased incentives for aggression.

The relationship between the increased risks of civil and international wars in the Middle East and North Africa in the wake of the Arab uprisings and threats to US interests is obvious. The United States has a number of key interests in the region, including maintaining access to the region's oil and natural gas reserves; containing Iranian power and influence; minimizing the threat posed by terrorist networks, most notably al-Qa'ida, ISIS, and their affiliates; and protecting its allies. Widespread conflict caused by democratization due to the three pathways discussed above threatens all of these interests.

Potential Benefits for the United States Created by the Arab Uprisings

Although the Arab uprisings clearly created a number of major risks to US interests in the Middle East and North Africa, they also could have resulted in major advantages. Once again, I frame my analysis of the stakes for the United States in terms of how the situation may have appeared to US leaders during the early years of the protests. My focus is on potential security benefits for the United States, as opposed to advancing humanitarian objectives.

The Obama administration in 2011 could have reasonably anticipated three major benefits for US interests resulting from the Arab uprisings. The protests could have: (1) weakened existing enemies of the United States; (2) empowered key allies; or (3) created a more stable foundation for the projection of US influence in coming decades. These potential benefits of the Arab uprisings are the flip side of the potential disadvantages analyzed in the previous section. Although the protests may have toppled illiberal allies of the United States, they may also have led to the overthrow or weakening of illiberal enemies. Moreover, whereas the Arab uprisings may have led to more violence and conflict, especially in the short run, in the long run these revolts could create a firmer foundation for greater peace and stability. The problem for the United States during the Obama presidency was that it was less likely to reap these benefits than the costs described in the previous section. It is therefore not surprising that Obama's dominant reaction to the protests was one of caution and limited support.

The enemy of the United States that was most likely to be harmed by the protests was Iran. To begin with, the civil war in Syria was likely to weaken, and potentially end, Iran's alliance with Syria. This coalition, which began in 1979, has been critical to the advancement of Iran's interests through the decades. Close ties with Syria have provided Iran a conduit by which it could project its influence into the Arab world, most notably into Lebanon and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (Most of the weapons that Iran provides Hizbollah in Lebanon flow through Syria.)

The great importance of the Syrian-Iranian alliance is revealed by the lengths to which Iranian leaders have gone to help prop up the Asad government despite its brutality in the Syrian civil war. The Iranians have provided Asad expansive aid, including weapons, money, and logistical training and support. Asad's fall would most likely mean the empowerment of Sunni groups in Syria. At a minimum, this change would mean less cooperation with Iran as Syrian foreign policies became more similar to those adopted by most Sunni-led Arab countries. At a maximum, a new regime in Syria could ally with Saudi Arabia, which, among Muslim-majority countries, is Iran's greatest competitor in the region. Saudi leaders clearly hoped for this last outcome; hence their arming of Syrian opposition groups, including more hard-line Islamist factions.

In addition to potentially undermining the Syrian-Iranian alliance, the Arab uprisings also threatened Iran's interests by reducing its "soft power," which is the ability to influence others based on the attractiveness of one's beliefs, principles, and actions. Iranian leaders have long tried to gain support in the Arab world by attempting to exploit Arab populations' frustrations with the lack of freedom and opportunity in their countries.[69] If democratic revolutions proved successful in the Middle East and North Africa, this opportunity for Iran would be reduced because a key source of Arabs' frustrations—the oppressiveness of their governments—would have been removed. Even worse from Iranian leaders' perspective was the issue of their crushing Iran's protest movement in 2009 and supporting the Asad government's brutality in the Syrian civil war, making clear that Iranian policymakers care little for people's rights. This issue has also weakened Hizbollah's standing in the region, as it, too, has strongly supported the Asad regime. US leaders were quick to try to capitalize on these developments. As President Obama stated, Iran's support of Asad "speaks to the hypocrisy of the Iranian regime, which says it stands for the rights of protesters abroad, yet represses its own people at home. Let's remember that the first peaceful protests in the region were in the streets of Tehran [in 2009]."[70] Even leaders who are potentially more sympathetic to Iran condemned it for its actions in Syria. Most notably, Egyptian president Morsi, while visiting Iran in August 2012 during a gathering of the 120-nation Nonaligned Movement, rebuked his host and all those who supported Asad instead of the forces for democracy in Syria.[71] The more the illiberalism and oppression of the Iranian regime is spotlighted, the less soft power it is likely to have, to the benefit of US interests in the region.

Although this cost to Iran (and consequent benefit to the United States) was in play during the early years of the Arab uprisings, it did not last. The widespread violence and brutality that followed in states in which authoritarian governments had been weakened or overthrown—especially in Syria and Libya—ended up boosting the legitimacy of the Iranian regime.[72] The Islamic Republic, despite its repressive policies, did not suffer from the intense violence of these other countries. To many, order—even a repressive order—is preferable to the open and near-constant brutality that tends to accompany civil war.

A second way in which the protests might have benefited the United States is by empowering a key ally in the region, Turkey. Numerous public opinion polls and related data documented that Turkey during the early years of the Arab uprisings—especially in states like Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya that were trying to create new political systems after ousting authoritarian governments—was the most popular country in the Islamic world. One 2012 pubic option poll found that 80 percent of respondents had a favorable view of Turkey, and 60 percent considered Turkey's political system under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) a model for their country.[73] Leading political parties in Tunisia and Egypt explicitly modeled themselves on the JDP in Turkey.[74] The sources of this popularity and emulation were clearly based upon Turkey's ample soft power. The success of the JDP in creating a dynamic economy while also protecting religious identities within a democratic system of government was a source of tremendous appeal throughout the Islamic world. Given these facts, the more that democratic revolutions succeeded in the Middle East and North Africa, the more Turkey's influence was likely to grow. As one senior Turkish official stated in the fall of 2011, "What's happening in the Middle East is a big opportunity, a golden opportunity" for Turkey. Suat Kiniklioğlu, the JDP's deputy chairman of external affairs, similarly asserted that his government's reactions to the Arab uprisings were designed "to make the most of the influence we have in a region that is embracing our leadership."[75]

The growth of Turkey's influence in the Middle East and North Africa based on its soft power could have benefited US interests in key ways, most notably by helping to curtail the spread of Iranian sway in the region. Iranian policymakers were aware that they were in a soft-power contest with Turkey to see which state had more allure throughout the Arab world. Iranian leaders, for example, derided Turkey's prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's calls for Egypt and Tunisia to adopt secularism in their new constitutions. The Iranians no doubt hoped to see these countries adopt more hard-line Islamist governments. Ayatollah Mahmood Hashemi Shahroudi, the former chief of Iran's judiciary, scornfully dismissed Turkey's efforts to spread democracy in the Middle East as an example of "liberal Islam" that was designed to try to counter Iran's regional influence.[76] Ali-Akbar Velayati, senior adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, made similar statements, as did Yahya Safavi, the former commander of the Revolutionary Guards.[77] Iranian policymakers recognized that the more that Turkey was able to spread its ideological principles in those states made vulnerable by the Arab uprisings, the more Iran's regional influence would have been reduced.[78] Making matters worse for the Iranians, "privately, Iranian officials acknowledge that Ankara's soft-power strategy is more appealing in the long term. . . . Turkey's comprehensive soft power in the region, including cultural affinity, economic ties, a balanced approach toward Israel, and the example of a democratic government that allows for the assertion of Islamic identity, presents Iran with a major challenge in any future competition for leadership in the region."[79] US leaders recognized that the spread of Turkish influence in the Middle East and North Africa benefited US interests and pushed Turkey to assert itself as an ideological model throughout the region.[80] The result was a deepening of the alliance between the two countries, one that had been strained in previous years because of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq.

Once again, however, this benefit to the United States proved to be relatively short-lived.[81] Turkey's government in the Arab Spring era moved in an increasingly illiberal direction. In June 2013, for example, Turkish police suppressed large-scale protests (centered in Gezi Park in Istanbul) of governmental policies. Nearly a dozen protestors were killed and thousands wounded. In December, a massive governmental scandal came to light. Erdogan and members of his immediate family, as well as senior ministers in the party and close business associates, were accused of bribery and corruption that resulted in the illegal accumulation of millions of dollars. Erdogan responded to this crisis by concentrating his power while greatly weakening the checks and balances among branches of government. He did so by firing thousands of prosecutors, judges, and police officers who were involved with the investigation into the scandal.[82]

The trends of repressing core civil liberties and stifling popular dissent and criticism continued into 2014. Freedom House in this year downgraded Turkey's press from "partly free" to "not free" after the government engaged in repeated attacks on the media, including raiding newspaper and television headquarters, arresting journalists, banning more than fifty thousand websites, and blocking access to YouTube and Twitter in the lead-up to the March 2014 local elections. According to Reporters Without Borders, by 2015 Turkey ranked 149th in the world in press freedoms.[83]

The more illiberal Turkey's government became, the less appeal it had as a model to democratic parties in the Arab World. For example, Rashid al-Ghannouchi, who was the cofounder and leader of Tunisia's moderate Islamist party, Ennahda, frequently pointed to Turkey during the first two years of the Arab uprisings as a model for democratization. Beginning in 2013, however, he not only excluded Turkey from his list of sources of emulation but openly criticized the country's domestic policies that threatened minority rights.[84] Al-Ghannouchi's position reflected a wider shift, as both survey data and media reports in multiple Arab states became increasingly critical of Turkey. The country's domestic scandals and increasing repression were frequently cited as central reasons for the growing belief that Turkey was no longer a prominent model worthy of emulation.[85] If the spread of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa helped the United States by increasing the influence of Turkey, one of America's long-standing regional allies, the major reduction of Turkey's soft power due to the illiberal direction of its domestic policies significantly weakened this benefit.

A final, and perhaps the most important, advantage for the United States potentially created by the Arab Spring protests—if they resulted in the establishment of democratic regimes—is that they could have been a source of long-term political stability. It is true, as discussed previously, that the overthrow of dictatorial regimes allows for greater opportunities for civil violence as factional disputes in this new environment are much more free to surface in the absence of governmental coercion. At the same time, however, the end of a dictatorial regime and the subsequent creation of a stable democratic one remove a major source of popular frustration and resentment, which in turn also reduce the ability of violent organizations like al-Qa'ida to recruit people to join their extremist cause. Both developments are important forces working for domestic peace. The Obama administration recognized these relationships even before the Arab uprisings began. On August 12, 2010, Obama sent a five-page memorandum titled "Political Reform in the Middle East and North Africa" to senior members of his foreign policy team. The president noted that there was evidence in the Middle East and North Africa of "growing citizen discontent with the region's regimes" and stated, "If present trends continue [allies there will] opt for repression rather than reform to manage domestic dissent. . . . Increased repression could threaten the political and economic stability of some of our allies, leave us with fewer capable, credible partners who can support our regional priorities, and further alienate citizens in the region. . . . Moreover, our regional and international credibility will be undermined if we are seen or perceived to be backing repressive regimes and ignoring the rights and aspirations of citizens."[86]

Related forces also work at the international level. Although democratizing states are often a source of international conflict as documented above, established liberal democratic regimes tend to be pacific, at least in terms of relations with one another. This relationship is known in the international relations literature as the "democratic peace." One prominent political scientist labels the tendency for established democratic states not to war with one another "the closest thing to an empirical law in international relations [that] we have."[87]

Based on the insights of the democratic peace thesis, the spread of stable democratic regimes at the expense of illiberal ones could benefit the United States by removing ideology-based hostilities with current illiberal enemies and ideology-based frictions with current illiberal allies.[88] The establishment of stable democracies in the Middle East and North Africa thus would create a greater likelihood that cooperation between the United States and some countries in these regions will be based not only on shared material interests but also on shared values. The more this is the case, the more solid the foundation for America's alliance relations is likely to be. Of course, there are two not-easily-realized conditions that must be met before this benefit can be realized: an authoritarian regime has to be toppled and replaced with a democratic one with a largely pro-US public, and the hazards of democratization need to be overcome.

CONCLUSION: WHAT CAN THE UNITED STATES DO?

Given the major potential threats and opportunities to US interests created by widespread protests in the Arab world, what policies can US leaders adopt that are the most likely to minimize the costs and maximize the benefits? The first step in effective policymaking in response to the Arab uprisings or similar mass protests should be dispositional in nature, meaning that US leaders should approach decision making in the context of specific attitudes. Most important, the Americans should have both realistic expectations about what is possible in the region and humility about their ability to affect change in the desired direction. States in the Middle East and North Africa, even those that hold reasonably competitive elections after overthrowing a dictator, are unlikely to become stable liberal democracies anytime soon. Many of the major problems and issues that led to the Arab uprisings—including widespread "youth bulges" (disproportionate numbers of young people in a society and strongly associated with domestic violence) and very high levels of unemployment and corruption—are likely to remain potent forces of instability even after transitions to democracy have begun. The end of authoritarian regimes does eliminate some key sources of instability by reducing political repression and advancing the rule of law and transparency. The same development, though, could also increase the probability of continued civil violence by allowing social divisions and extremist groups more room to operate, hence the perils of democratizing states discussed earlier.

In addition to realistic expectations about the likelihood of transitions to stable democracies in the near future, humility should also inform US policymaking. American leaders should recognize that if they choose to intervene in Middle Eastern and North African politics, their ability to help create democratic regimes is modest. Worse than this, there is the very real possibility that US intervention can make a bad situation considerably worse. The US experience in Iraq after 2003 demonstrates the first of these points. The United States invaded this country, occupied it for a decade, and spent hundreds of billions of dollars on development and reconstruction—none of which are likely to happen again in the foreseeable future. Many would argue Iraq in important ways is a better place than when it was ruled by the iron fist of Saddam Hussein; however, even after all the American blood and treasure spent there, it remains, according to independent analyses, an "unfree" state marked by high levels of political corruption, sectarian disputes, violence, and major threats to minority rights.[89]

A humble disposition would also help make US policymakers more aware of the potential pernicious effects of unintended consequences created by intervention that could result in a more, not a less, threatening situation. The impossibility of anticipating all outcomes created by interventions should be a major source of caution and restraint. For example, the prevention of a massacre in Libya in 2011 was clearly a good thing. But the toppling of the Gadafi regime, which resulted from these efforts, also allowed thousands of weapons to disappear, many of which ended up in the hands of extremist Islamist groups who used them against Western interests, most notably in Mali, Algeria, and Lebanon; some of the weapons have also reportedly been smuggled into Egypt, Gaza, Chad, and Syria.[90] Awareness of the potential negative effects of unintended consequences should create a major caution against forcible regime promotion, while creating additional incentives for higher levels of preparedness to deal with unexpected contingencies if the United States and its allies should nevertheless choose to intervene. For example, a larger NATO ground presence in Libya at the end of the intervention could have helped secure more of Gadafi's huge store of weapons before they fell into extremist groups' hands. Obama stated that failing to adequately prepare for the aftermath of ousting Gadafi was the "worst mistake" of his presidency.[91]

Finally, American policymakers must recognize, in a spirit of humility, that democratic institutions and values in the Islamic world are probably not going to replicate those found in the United States. Democracy is most likely to be successful when it grows organically out of a culture's traditions and values. In the Middle East and North Africa, this means that religion will probably have a much greater impact on political and social life than many in the United States would deem acceptable. Political Islamists of some variety may well be the key actors in many newly revolutionized countries for the foreseeable future. This outcome, however, is not necessarily detrimental to US interests if liberal Islamists dominate decision making, for reasons discussed above.

Although US leaders should not be overly optimistic about either the probability of Middle Eastern and North African states smoothly transitioning to stable democracies or America's ability to move outcomes in this direction, they should not be overly pessimistic either, at least in the long run. Because authoritarian regimes do not allow for the development of effective political and legal institutions, political parties, or civil institutions, many of the troubles that newly revolutionized countries in the Arab world are currently experiencing are neither surprising nor unusual. To the contrary, these challenges are very similar, according to political scientist Sheri Berman, to the early stages of democratic transitions in other countries worldwide, including those in Europe.[92] Violence and political paralysis after the ouster of a dictator, in short, by no means precludes an eventual successful evolution to stable democracy.

Furthermore, although the ability to export democracy to the region is limited, this does not mean that the United States cannot be a valuable aid to the creation of key components of liberalization, including helping to create transparent, accountable, inclusive political and legal institutions as well as a thriving civil society. Many of the policies that could help to bring about these outcomes are not particularly expensive or risky. To begin with, the United States can support various programs in the Middle East and North Africa that help create educated and cosmopolitan civil societies. As Stephen Grand asserts: "The United States should be encouraging 'brain circulation'—the flow of people and ideas in, out, and across the region. For example, Washington should continue to support greater Internet access and Internet freedom, and find more ways for Arab and American youth to connect via social and virtual media. . . . The aim should be to help create a new generation of citizens who are more educated, more open to the world, and more connected to one another. If the past is any guide, this will be the best guarantor of democracy's long-term success."[93] To achieve these outcomes, US leaders could also push for extensive student, professional development, and cultural exchanges, as well as the creation in Muslim-majority countries of educational institutions that stress science and technology and the dangers of extremism.[94] In light of this analysis, the Trump administration's efforts in 2017 to ban travel from seven Muslim-majority countries is particularly noteworthy, as it is the opposite of the prescriptions described above.

In terms of encouraging governments to adopt liberalizing reforms, Washington is again not without leverage. US leaders could threaten to take away or reduce economic or military support from allies, or promise to provide additional aid every time a country meets a predetermined benchmark for reform. Some of the United States' greatest success stories in the past of fostering liberalism have been with allies (including South Korea, Taiwan, South Africa, and the Philippines), and the use of these "carrots and sticks" has been key to this process.[95] Despite the potential benefits these tactics offer, the Obama administration did not adopt them in key instances. Although Obama imposed an arms freeze on Egypt after the 2013 coup, he lifted it in 2015 despite no progress toward democracy or improved rights protections, which were the initial preconditions for the restoration of aid. Obama supported the continuation of Egypt's annual military aid of $1.3 billion despite the Egyptian government's brutal repression of the Muslim Brotherhood and the general contraction of civil and political liberties. The Trump administration has gone even further in this direction, not only delinking military aid from human rights concerns—as he also did for Bahrain—but praising in a White House meeting the authoritarian President el-Sisi for his handling of suspected terrorists.[96] The United States during the Obama presidency did, however, provide Tunisia roughly $300 million to support the transition to democracy through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).[97]

Beyond these policies designed to stimulate reform are ones of direct military interventions, from arming insurgents in target states to the deployment of US forces. These are much more costly and risky, for the reasons described above. Fears of unintended consequences and making a bad situation worse played, for example, a key role in the Obama administration's refusal to arm in a major way the Syrian rebels. There are, however, risks to inaction as well as action. By not aiding the rebels, some argue that Obama was refusing to tilt the balance against a brutal regime while forgoing an opportunity to ensure that moderate groups within the opposition remained more powerful than extremist ones. It is possible that more forceful intervention in support of some rebel groups early in the Syrian civil war could have prevented the rise of the Islamic State.

This chapter has described the considerable potential advantages and disadvantages for US security that resulted from the Arab uprisings. Some important dimensions of America's security architecture in the region are unlikely to change in the near future despite these revolutionary developments. The United States, for example, is likely to continue to rely on close relations with some authoritarian governments (especially those, like Saudi Arabia, that have been largely untouched by the Arab Spring) in order to best protect some of its core material interests.[98] However, the Middle East and North Africa will almost certainly not return to the political status quo that held before the protests began. Even though the protests in most countries have proven largely unsuccessful in realizing their ultimate objectives, the powerful forces that led to the demonstrations, including a widespread yearning for the better protection of basic rights, will surely not abate. The future is therefore likely to see other periods of mass political protests, which will create many of the same threats and opportunities to US interests—and thus many of the same decisions to be made—as described above.

Notes

1. "Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo," *New York Times*, June 4, 2009.

2. Ryan Lizza, "The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring Remade Obama's Foreign Policy," *The New Yorker*, May 2, 2011. The decision to invade Iraq in 2003 and try to democratize it is the most obvious example of Bush's freedom agenda at work. It also included hard-line policies toward Iran and Syria as part of an effort to provoke regime changes in these countries.

3. Henry R. Nau, "Obama's Foreign Policy," *Policy Review,* Hoover Institution, April and May 2010, http://www.hoover.org/research/obamas-foreign-policy.

4. "Obama's Speech in Cairo."

5. David Sanger, "Half a Doctrine Will Have to Do," *New York Times*, May 21, 2011.

6. Quoted in Sanger, "Half a Doctrine Will Have to Do."

7. "Obama's Mideast Speech," *New York Times*, May 19, 2011. Earlier in the year, Obama's secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, also asserted a synergy between America's ideological and security interests when she claimed that "without genuine progress [in the Middle East] toward open and accountable political systems, the gap between people and their governments will grow, and instability will only deepen. This is not simply a matter of idealism; it is a strategic necessity." (Quoted in "Clinton: Mideast Must Reform Despite Risks," Associated Press, February 5, 2011.)

8. Kenneth Jost, "Unrest in the Arab World," *CQ Researcher* 23, no. 5 (February 1, 2013): 124.

9. Kim Ghattas, "How Does the US View Tunisia's Revolt?," BBC News, January 16, 2011.

10. Quoted in Shadi Hamid, "Tunisia: Birthplace of the Revolution," in Kenneth M. Pollack et al., *The Arab Awakening: America and the Transformation of the Middle East* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 115.

11. Quoted in Lizza, "The Consequentialist."

12. Shadi Hamid, "Egypt: The Prize," in Pollack et al., *The Arab Awakening*, 103.

13. Lizza, "The Consequentialist."

14. Quoted in Helene Cooper and Robert F. Worth, "In Arab Spring, Obama Finds Sharp Test," *New York Times,* September 24, 2012.

15. Jeremy Pressman, "Same Old Story? Obama and the Arab Uprisings," in Mark L. Haas and David W. Lesch, eds., *The Arab Spring: Change and Resistance in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 224.

16. Cooper and Worth, "In Arab Spring, Obama Finds Sharp Test."

17. Bruce K. Rutherford, "Egypt: The Origins and Consequences of the January 25 Uprising," in Haas and Lesch, eds., *The Arab Spring,* 43.

18. On this change, see Pressman, "Same Old Story?," 222, 230–231.

19. Akram Al-Turk, "Libya: From Revolt to State Building," in Pollack et al., *The Arab Awakening*, 120.

20. Russia abstained in the vote on this resolution. When the Western powers used it as cover for regime change in Libya as opposed to preventing mass killings only, Russian leaders felt duped, which subsequently hardened their position against a similar UN resolution when civilian deaths in Syria escalated.

21. Mary-Jane Deeb, "The Arab Spring: Libya's Second Revolution," in Haas and Lesch, eds., *The Arab Spring,* 65.

22. Lizza, "The Consequentialist."

23. Laura Kasinof and David E. Sanger, “U.S. Shifts to Seek Removal of Yemen’s Leader, An Ally,” *New York Times*, April 3, 2011.

24. Quoted in Pressman, “Same Old Story?,” 224.

25. Clifford Krauss, “Bahrain’s Rulers Tighten Their Grip on Battered Opposition,” *New York Times*, April 6, 2011.

26. Ethan Bronner and Michael Slackman, “Saudi Troops Enter Bahrain to Help Put Down Unrest,” *New York Times*, March 14, 2011.

27. Michael S. Doran and Salman Shaikh, “Bahrain: Island of Troubles,” in Pollack et al., *The Arab Awakening*, 193. Obama’s quotation is also from this source.

28. Pressman, “Same Old Story?,” 224.

29. “U.S. Resumes Bahrain Arms Sales Despite Rights Concerns,” Reuters, May 11, 2012.

30. Quoted in Pressman, “Same Old Story?,” 226.

31. For a comprehensive analysis of US policies, objectives, and concerns toward Syria in this period, see David W. Lesch, *Syria: The Fall of the House of Assad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012). Part of my analysis in this section is drawn from this work.

32. “U.S., Europe Call for Syrian Leader al-Assad to Step Down,” CNN.com, August 18, 2011, http://www.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/08/18/us.syria/index.html.

33. Quoted in Jeremy Pressman, “US Policy After the Uprisings: Alliances, Democracy, and Force,” in Mark L. Haas and David W. Lesch, eds., *The Arab Spring: The Hope and Reality of the Uprisings*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2017), 281. When the Asad government in August 2013 used chemical weapons despite Obama’s warning, the United States and Russia negotiated the removal of much of Syria’s chemical weapons stockpile from the country.

34. On the preceding points, see Steven Lee Myers, “U.S. Joins Effort to Equip and Pay Rebels in Syria,” *New York Times*, April 1, 2012; David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Weighs Bolder Effort to Intervene in Syria’s Conflict,” *New York Times*, November 28, 2012; Mark Landler and Michael R. Gordon, “Obama Says U.S. Will Recognize Syrian Rebels,” *New York Times*, December 11, 2012; Michael R. Gordon, “Kerry Says Administration Backs Mideast Efforts to Arm Syrian Rebels,” *New York Times*, March 5, 2013; Jeremy Binnie and Neil Gibson, “US Arms Shipment to Syrian Rebels Detailed,” *IHS Jane’s Defence Weekly,* April 8, 2016, http://www.janes.com/article/59374/us-arms-shipment-to-syrian-rebels-detailed.

35. See, for example, David D. Kirkpatrick, “For the United States, Arab Spring Raises Questions of Values Versus Interests,” *New York Times*, July 27, 2012; Pressman, “US Policy After the Uprisings,” 274–275.

36. On how ideological differences among states are frequently a major source of security threats and ideological similarities often a source of cooperation, see Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

37. Shibley Telhami, “Arab Public Opinion: What Do They Want?,” in Pollack et al., *The Arab Awakening*, 15, emphasis in original.

38. Both sets of polling data from Telhami, “Arab Public Opinion,” 18.

39. Richard Wike, “Wait, You Still Don’t Like Us?,” *Foreign Policy,* September 19, 2012, http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/19/wait-you-still-dont-like-us/.

40. “Opinion of the United States: Do You Have a Favorable or Unfavorable View of the U.S.?, ” Global Indicators Database, Pew Research Center, http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/group/6/; Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes, and Jacob Poushter, “America’s Global Image,” Pew Research Center, June 23, 2015, http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/23/1-americas-global-image/.

41. Reza Marashi and Trita Parsi, “The Gift and the Curse: Iran and the Arab Spring,” in Haas and Lesch, eds., *The Arab Spring,* 133–151; Suzanne Maloney, “Iran: The Bogeyman,” in Pollack et al., *The Arab Awakening*, 258–261.

42. Wike, "Wait, You Still Don't Like Us?" See also Telhami, "Arab Public Opinion," 15.

43. Wike, "Wait, You Still Don't Like Us?"

44. The Donald Trump administration's efforts in 2017 to impose a travel ban to the United States from citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) illustrate both the repellence and attraction that many Muslims have for the United States. The policies were widely condemned, but many Muslims appreciated the fact that US citizens had the ability to publicly protest the president's actions, which many did. See, for example, Thomas Erdbrink, "Burn an American Flag? Some Iranians Are Saying No," *New York Times*, February 9, 2017.

45. Additional good news in this area for the United States is that liberalizing elites in other countries are sometimes more interested in close ties with it than public opinion would seem to allow. Liberalizing political groups have an interest in cooperation with the United States if this cooperation results in economic, security, or other benefits that facilitate the realization of their domestic objectives. (For evidence that supports these claims for liberalizing groups in Iran and Turkey, see Mark L. Haas, "Missed Ideological Opportunities and George W. Bush's Middle Eastern Policies," *Security Studies* 21, no. 3 [September 2012]: 436–439; Mark L. Haas, *The Clash of Ideologies: Middle Eastern Politics and American Security* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2012], chs. 2 and 4.) It is true that US support of reformist groups in the Middle East and North Africa can hurt their cause by allowing them to be portrayed by rivals as "traitors" or "stooges" of foreigners (see Ronald R. Krebs, "Rethinking the Battle of Ideas: How the United States Can Help Muslim Moderates," *Orbis* 52, no. 2 [Spring 2008]: 332–346). However, groups that already possess some political power or have an already-established base of domestic support are likely to be less worried about alienating nationalistic sentiments, which will allow them to court foreign support with greater impunity.

46. Parts of the following three paragraphs are taken from Mark L. Haas and David W. Lesch, "Introduction," in Haas and Lesch, eds., *The Arab Spring,* 5–6.

47. Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New 'Islamo-Liberal' Reformists," *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 345–365; Rutherford, "Egypt."

48. Haas, *The Clash of Ideologies*, chs. 2 and 4.

49. David Sanger and Eric Schmitt, "U.S.-Saudi Tensions Intensify with Mideast Turmoil," *New York Times*, March 14, 2011.

50. Quoted in Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, "Interests of Saudi Arabia and Iran Collide, with the U.S. in the Middle," *New York Times*, March 17, 2011.

51. Nawaf Obaid, "Amid the Arab Spring, a U.S.-Saudi Split," *Washington Post*, May 15, 2011.

52. Bruce O. Riedel, "Saudi Arabia: The Elephant in the Living Room," in Pollack et al., *The Arab Awakening*, 161; Samuel Helfont and Tally Helfont, "Jordan: Between the Arab Spring and the Gulf Cooperation Council," and Mehran Kamrava, "The Arab Spring and the Saudi-Led Counterrevolution," both in *Orbis* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 82–95 and 96–104, respectively.

53. John R. Bradley, "Saudi Arabia's Invisible Hand in the Arab Spring," *Foreign Affairs*, October 13, 2011, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2011-10-13/saudi-arabias-invisible-hand-arab-spring.

54. There were good reasons to believe that the odds were stacked against efforts to democratize states in the Middle East and North Africa. These handicaps included authoritarianism's long history in the region, which had stunted the development of a strong civil society; high levels of sectarian heterogeneity; and the lack of successful democracies close by that could provide a local example and support.

55. As the theologian and international relations theorist Reinhold Niebuhr put it, "The political life of man must constantly steer between the Scylla of anarchy and the Charybdis of tyranny." Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York: Scribner, 1940), 14. The following analysis on the tyranny-anarchy loop is drawn from Mark L. Haas and David W. Lesch, "Uprisings in the Arab World: Tyranny, Anarchy, and (Perhaps) Democracy," in Haas and Lesch, eds., *The Arab Spring*, 2nd ed., 7–8.

56. Daniel L. Byman, "Terrorism: Al-Qaeda and the Arab Spring," in Pollack et al., *The Arab Awakening*, 76–77.

57. Jeremy M. Sharp, "Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention," Congressional Research Service, October 2, 2015.

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94. A prime example of this last policy in action is the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), which was founded in Saudi Arabia in 2009. KAUST is the first of several new universities that are scheduled to be built in the kingdom, all of which will focus not on religious studies but on applied sciences. KAUST is Saudi Arabia's first co-ed university, and others plan to be so as well. The Saudis contracted with leading US universities to provide curricular, research, and faculty-hiring help.

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EPILOGUE

The Early Days of the Trump Administration's Middle East Policy

David W. Lesch and Mark L. Haas

At the time of this writing, the Trump presidency is still in its early days, but three key trends have already emerged with regard to its approach to the Middle East. First, it is clear that the Trump presidency places much greater emphasis on the utility of "hard" than "soft" power ("hard power" refers to military instruments, "soft power" to the attractiveness of one's principles and policies). The number of US-initiated air and drone strikes in the Middle East has increased significantly during the Trump administration compared to the Obama administration, with less civilian oversight of missions and more civilian casualties.[1] Also, Trump, unlike Obama, ordered attacks on Syrian military facilities in April 2017 after the administration concluded that the regime of Bashar al-Asad had used chemical weapons.

At the same time, the Trump administration is less interested in developing its soft-power appeal. The president has repeatedly attempted to implement a travel ban from seven Muslim-majority countries, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen (Iraq was dropped after the first attempt; thus far the bans have been overturned completely or partially in US courts). US leaders have also backed away, even at the rhetorical level, from supporting the spread abroad of basic political and civil liberties, noting the costs to US interests created by championing US values. As Secretary of State Rex Tillerson explained in a May 2017 speech to Department of State employees: "If we condition [US policies] too heavily that others must adopt this value that we've come to over a long history of our own, it really creates obstacles to our ability to advance our national security interests."[2]

The last development ties in with a second trend exhibited by Trump: a warm embrace of authoritarian allies. Although Bush and Obama maintained security cooperation with authoritarian regimes, their support of human rights and political liberalization did cause important frictions with some of these states, especially Saudi Arabia. The Trump administration, though, has dropped these sources of tension. Praise of Egyptian, Turkish, Saudi, and Bahraini leaders has been effusive, even as human rights abuses and illiberal policies have continued and, in some cases, intensified.

Finally, the Trump administration has declared permanent enmity toward two Islamist regimes, the Islamic State and the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a candidate, Trump promised to "bomb the hell" out of the Islamic State, and his administration has increased military efforts to weaken it. Anti-Iranianism has also constituted a key theme of the administration, which stands in particular contrast to the Obama administration's efforts to engage the regime. In a speech given in Riyadh in May 2017, Trump made clear that Iran was the root source of the terrorist threats to the United States and its allies, asserting that "no discussion of stamping out [the terrorist] threat would be complete without mentioning the government that gives terrorists . . . safe harbor, financial backing, and the social standing needed for recruitment. It is a regime that is responsible for so much instability in the region. I am speaking of course of Iran."[3] However, thus far, Trump has not taken a measurably different tack towards Iran from the Obama administration: while Trump frequently condemns the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear accord, he has preserved it.

As the emphasis on hard power, support of authoritarian allies, and anti-Islamism (and especially anti-Iranianism) feed into and support one another, they are likely to be enduring features of the Trump presidency. What exactly this means in terms of concrete policy action on the part of the Trump administration, its relationship with the Middle East, and how the Middle East views the United States remains to be seen.

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